





*The* **KINGS TREASURIES**  
**OF LITERATURE**



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KING JAMES II

M.C.

# THE THIRD CHAPTER OF MACAULAY'S HISTORY



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# INTRODUCTION

THIS book forms a part of one of the most famous histories in the English language. History is not usually a popular subject; people are inclined to regard it as dull and uninteresting, yet it should not be so, for it deals with the events which have made our nation and ourselves what we are to-day. The importance of history to all of us lies in the fact that upon the correct reading of the past depends our progress in the future.

Macaulay himself found history full of interest, and made up his mind to write an historical work which should be as entertaining and popular as a novel. He declared that he would not be satisfied unless he produced a book which would supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies.

He aimed at making his History interesting and easily read; in this he was entirely successful, for no book since the day when Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* had been published made a success equal to the History. Within a generation of its publication over 140,000 copies were sold in the United Kingdom alone; it also sold on a large scale in the United States of America, and it was translated into all the chief languages of Europe. The author found one great reward for the immense labour of writing the History in the enjoyment of men who usually read but little, but who could not resist the attraction

of this great work. On one occasion a vote of thanks was passed to him for writing a history "which working men could understand." Indeed in the same way that many people have gained their knowledge of England in the Middle Ages from the plays of Shakespeare, so their acquaintance with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is derived from the writings of Macaulay.

The History deals with the period covered by the reigns of James II. and William III., an epoch which marked the end of a form of government, the rule of the monarch, which had lasted since 1485, and the rise of the rule of Parliament which exists in our own times. The Revolution of 1688 which forms the central feature of Macaulay's work may be regarded as the completion of the work of Cromwell and the Parliament forty years earlier. There is scarcely any period of history which has had a greater effect upon events of our own time, and it is well worth the attention which Macaulay gave to it.

In the first two chapters he treats in outline the history of England from the earliest times to the death of Charles II. as an introduction to his subject, while in the famous Chapter III., "The State of England in 1685," he sets out as it were the stage for the actors to perform their parts.

Macaulay possessed in a high degree the power of conceiving the past as a living reality and of re-peopleing old scenes with their bygone dwellers. Chapter III. is an excellent example of this power of romantic "castle-building."

In collecting material for the History he consulted every available source of information; these are noted at the foot of the pages and while many of them may not be accessible to the reader they are retained as one indication of the range of Macaulay's reading and of the pains he took in the work. The editorial notes are purposely few and brief. Those only are inserted which are necessary for understanding the allusions, and which are not easily accessible to the general reader. Notes indicated by numbers are Macaulay's original comments. A short description and criticism of the sources of the History are included in the Commentary at the end of the book.

In studying this book readers will no doubt form very decided opinions about Macaulay as a man, a writer, and an historian, and in order that they may compare their views with those of other people, a short account of his life and writings is included in this work.

This Chapter III. consists of two pictures of England, the end of the seventeenth century and the middle of the nineteenth century. In the interval between these two periods our country went through a great change, the transition from an agricultural to an industrial nation. To help the reader to estimate the effects of this change and to supplement Macaulay's description a short account is given of the way in which it was brought about.

This historical sketch also attempts to show in outline the development of England since Macaulay's day, and to indicate in which direction further advance

is probable. The diagrams and maps attempt to show the main facts in a simple manner.

Chapter III. is especially valuable in that it gives us a picture of England at the parting of the ways in the development of our land, a time when one set of forces declined and another set increased in power. In many respects the England of 1685 retained the features which had characterised her for many centuries, while our history since those days has been mainly concerned with aspects of life which, although they have existed since early times and were gradually growing in power, had not yet taken a prominent place in the lives of the people.

Up to 1700 England was mainly an agricultural nation whose life and interests were centred in rural districts, but after that time the industrial forces gained a rapidly increasing impetus until the balance of interest was reversed and we became pre-eminently an industrial people. The process was complete when Macaulay wrote in the middle of the nineteenth century.

This chapter of Macaulay with our historical sketch thus illustrates the important fact that history is not a series of isolated events, but a continuous growth with roots deep in the ages and that the Industrial Revolution which laid out the lines of our future history was not the result of accident, but the effect of natural development.

While at first view 1685 may appear as a foreign land to people of this age, in reality it contained in miniature many of the aspects of life which are



familiar to us to-day, and when with Macaulay we may be disposed to judge somewhat harshly the lives of our forefathers we should remember that it is on the foundations which they laid that we have built and that it is only because of what they were in ages past that we stand where we do to-day.





# THE THIRD CHAPTER OF MACAULAY'S HISTORY

## I. POPULATION AND TAXATION

I INTEND, in this chapter, to give a description of the state in which England was at the time when the crown passed from Charles the Second to his brother. Such a description, composed from scanty and dispersed materials, must necessarily be very imperfect. Yet it may perhaps correct some false notions which would make the subsequent narrative unintelligible or uninstructive.

If we would study with profit the history of our ancestors, we must be constantly on our guard against that delusion which the well-known names of families, places, and offices naturally produce, and must never forget that the country of which we read was a very different country from that in which we live. In every experimental science there is a tendency towards perfection. In every human being there is a wish to ameliorate his own condition. These two principles have often sufficed, even when counteracted by great public calamities and by bad institutions, to carry civilisation rapidly forward. No ordinary misfortune, no ordinary misgovernment, will do so much to make a nation wretched, as the constant progress of physical knowledge and the constant effort of every man

to better himself will do to make a nation prosperous. It has often been found that profuse expenditure, heavy taxation, absurd commercial restrictions, corrupt tribunals, disastrous wars, seditions, persecutions, conflagrations, inundations, have not been able to destroy capital so fast as the exertions of private citizens have been able to create it. It can easily be proved that, in our own land, the national wealth has, during at least six centuries, been almost uninterruptedly increasing; that it was greater under the Tudors than under the Plantagenets; that it was greater under the Stuarts than under the Tudors; that, in spite of battles, sieges, and confiscations, it was greater on the day of the Restoration than on the day when the Long Parliament met; that, in spite of maladministration, of extravagance, of public bankruptcy, of two costly and unsuccessful wars, of the pestilence and of the fire, it was greater on the day of the death of Charles the Second than on the day of his Restoration. This progress, having continued during many ages, became at length, about the middle of the eighteenth century, portentously rapid, and has proceeded, during the nineteenth, with accelerated velocity. In consequence partly of our geographical and partly of our moral position, we have, during several generations, been exempt from evils which have elsewhere impeded the efforts and destroyed the fruits of industry. While every part of the Continent, from Moscow to Lisbon, has been the theatre of bloody and devastating wars, no hostile standard has been seen here but as a trophy. While

revolutions have taken place all around us, our government has never once been subverted by violence. During a hundred years there has been in our island no tumult of sufficient importance to be called an insurrection. The law has never been borne down either by popular fury or by regal tyranny. Public credit has been held sacred. The administration of justice has been pure. Even in times which might by Englishmen be justly called evil times, we have enjoyed what almost every other nation in the world would have considered as an ample measure of civil and religious freedom. Every man has felt entire confidence that the state would protect him in the possession of what had been earned by his diligence and hoarded by his self-denial. Under the benignant influence of peace and liberty, science has flourished, and has been applied to practical purposes on a scale never before known. The consequence is that a change to which the history of the old world furnishes no parallel has taken place in our country. Could the England of 1685 be, by some magical process, set before our eyes, we should not know one landscape in a hundred or one building in ten thousand. The country gentleman would not recognise his own fields. The inhabitant of the town would not recognise his own street. Everything has been changed, but the great features of nature, and a few massive and durable works of human art. We might find out Snowdon and Windermere, the Cheddar Cliffs and Beachy Head. We might find out here and there a Norman minster, or a castle which



witnessed the wars of the Roses. But, with such rare exceptions, everything would be strange to us. Many thousands of square miles which are now rich corn land and meadow, intersected by green hedges, and dotted with villages and pleasant country seats, would appear as moors overgrown with furze, or fens abandoned to wild ducks. We should see straggling huts built of wood and covered with thatch, where we now see manufacturing towns and seaports renowned to the farthest ends of the world. The capital itself would shrink to dimensions not much exceeding those of its present suburb on the south of the Thames. Not less strange to us would be the garb and manners of the people, the furniture and the equipages, the interior of the shops and dwellings. Such a change in the state of a nation seems to be at least as well entitled to the notice of an historian as any change of the dynasty or of the ministry.

One of the first objects of an inquirer, who wishes to form a correct notion of the state of a community at a given time, must be to ascertain of how many persons that community then consisted. Unfortunately the population of England in 1685 cannot be ascertained with perfect accuracy. For no great state had then adopted the wise course of periodically numbering the people. All men were left to conjecture for themselves; and, as they generally conjectured without examining facts, and under the influence of strong passions and prejudices, their guesses were

*Suburb.* Southwark—no longer a suburb of London.

often ludicrously absurd. Even intelligent Londoners ordinarily talked of London as containing several millions of souls. It was confidently asserted by many that, during the thirty-five years which had elapsed between the accession of Charles the First and the Restoration, the population of the city had increased by two millions.<sup>1</sup> Even while the ravages of the plague and fire were recent, it was the fashion to say that the capital still had a million and a half of inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> Some persons, disgusted by these exaggerations, ran violently into the opposite extreme. Thus Isaac Vossius, a man of undoubted parts and learning, strenuously maintained that there were only two millions of human beings in England, Scotland, and Ireland taken together.<sup>3</sup>

We are not, however, left without the means of correcting the wild blunders into which some minds were hurried by national vanity and others by a morbid love of paradox. There are extant three computations which seem to be entitled to peculiar attention. They are entirely independent of each other; they proceed on different principles; and yet there is little difference in the results.

<sup>1</sup> *Observations on the Bills of Mortality*, by Captain John Graunt (Sir William Petty), chap. xi.

<sup>2</sup>                   She doth comprehend  
Full fifteen hundred thousand which do spend .  
Their days within.

*Great Britain's Beauty*, 1671.

<sup>3</sup> Isaac Vossius, *De Magnitudine Urbium Sinarum*, 1685. Vossius, as we learn from St. Evremond, talked on this subject oftener and longer than fashionable circles cared to listen.

One of these computations was made in the year 1696 by Gregory King, Lancaster herald, a political arithmetician of great acuteness and judgment. The basis of his calculations was the number of houses returned in 1690 by the officers who made the last collection of the hearth money. The conclusion at which he arrived was that the population of England was nearly five millions and a half.<sup>1</sup>

About the same time King William the Third was desirous to ascertain the comparative strength of the religious sects into which the community was divided. An inquiry was instituted; and reports were laid before him from all the dioceses of the realm. According to these reports the number of his English subjects must have been about five million two hundred thousand.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, in our own days, Mr. Finlaison, an actuary of eminent skill, subjected the ancient parochial registers to all the tests which the modern improvements in statistical science enabled him to apply. His opinion was, that at the close of the seventeenth

<sup>1</sup> King's *Natural and Political Observations*, 1696. This valuable treatise, which ought to be read as the author wrote it, and not as garbled by Davenant, will be found in some editions of Chalmers's *Estimate*.

<sup>2</sup> Dalrymple's *Appendix to Part II. Book I.* The practice of reckoning the population by sects was long fashionable. Gulliver says of the King of Brobdingnag, "He laughed at my odd arithmetic, as he was pleased to call it, in reckoning the numbers of our people by a computation drawn from the several sects among us in religion and politics."

*Hearth money.* Hearth or Chimney Tax of two shillings on every hearth.

century, the population of England was a little under five million two hundred thousand souls.<sup>1</sup>

Of these three estimates, framed without concert by different persons from different sets of materials, the highest, which is that of King, does not exceed the lowest, which is that of Finlaison, by one twelfth. We may, therefore, with confidence pronounce that, when James the Second reigned, England contained between five million and five million five hundred thousand inhabitants. On the very highest supposition she then had less than one third of her present population, and less than three times the population which is now collected in her gigantic capital.

The increase of the people has been great in every part of the kingdom, but generally much greater in the northern than in the southern shires. In truth, a large part of the country beyond Trent was, down to the eighteenth century, in a state of barbarism. Physical and moral causes had concurred to prevent civilisation from spreading to that region. The air was inclement; the soil was generally such as required skilful and industrious cultivation; and there could be little skill or industry in a tract which was often the theatre of war, and which, even when there was nominal peace, was constantly desolated by bands of Scottish marauders. Before the union of the two British crowns, and long after that union, there was as great a difference between Middlesex and Northumberland as there now is between Massachusetts

<sup>1</sup> Preface to the Population Returns of 1831.

*Union of the two British crowns. In 1603.*

and the settlements of those squatters who, far to the west of the Mississippi, administer a rude justice with the rifle and the dagger. In the reign of Charles the Second, the traces left by ages of slaughter and pillage were still distinctly perceptible, many miles south of the Tweed, in the face of the country and in the lawless manners of the people. There was still a large class of mosstroopers, whose calling was to plunder dwellings and to drive away whole herds of cattle. It was found necessary, soon after the Restoration, to enact laws of great severity for the prevention of these outrages. The magistrates of Northumberland and Cumberland were authorised to raise bands of armed men for the defence of property and order; and provision was made for meeting the expense of these levies by local taxation.<sup>1</sup> The parishes were required to keep bloodhounds for the purpose of hunting the freebooters. Many old men who were living in the middle of the eighteenth century could well remember the time when those ferocious dogs were common.<sup>2</sup> Yet, even with such auxiliaries, it was often found impossible to track the robbers to their retreats among the hills and morasses. For the geography of that wild country was very imperfectly known. Even after the accession of George the Third, the path over the fells from Borrowdale to Ravenglas was still a secret carefully kept by the dalesmen, some of whom had probably in their youth

<sup>1</sup> Statutes 14 Car. II. c. 22; 18 and 19 Car. II. c. 3; 29 and 30 Car. II. c. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholson and Bourne, *Discourse on the Ancient State of the Border*, 1777.



escaped from the pursuit of justice by that road.<sup>1</sup> The seats of the gentry and the larger farmhouses were fortified. Oxen were penned at night beneath the overhanging battlements of the residence, which was known by the name of Peel. The inmates slept with arms at their sides. Huge stones and boiling water were in readiness to crush and scald the plunderer who might venture to assail the little garrison. No traveller ventured into that country without making his will. The Judges on circuit, with the whole body of barristers, attorneys, clerks, and serving men, rode on horseback from Newcastle to Carlisle, armed and escorted by a strong guard under the command of the Sheriffs. It was necessary to carry provisions; for the country was a wilderness which afforded no supplies. The spot where the cavalcade halted to dine, under an immense oak, is not yet forgotten. The irregular vigour with which criminal justice was administered shocked observers whose life had been passed in more tranquil districts. Juries, animated by hatred and by a sense of common danger, convicted housebreakers and cattle stealers with the promptitude of a court martial in a mutiny; and the convicts were hurried by scores to the gallows.<sup>2</sup> Within the memory of some whom this generation has seen, the sportsman who wandered in pursuit of game to the sources of the Tyne found the heaths round Keeldar Castle peopled by a race

<sup>1</sup> Gray's *Journal of a Tour in the Lakes*, 3rd October, 1769.

<sup>2</sup> North's *Life of Guildford*. Hutchinson's *History of Cumberland*, parish of Brampton.

scarcely less savage than the Indians of California, and heard with surprise the half naked women chaunting a wild measure, while the men with brandished dirks danced a war dance.<sup>1</sup>

Slowly and with difficulty peace was established on the border. In the train of peace came industry and all the arts of life. Meanwhile it was discovered that the regions north of the Trent possessed in their coal beds a source of wealth far more precious than the gold mines of Peru. It was found that, in the neighbourhood of these beds, almost every manufacture might be most profitably carried on. A constant stream of emigrants began to roll northward. It appeared by the returns of 1841 that the ancient archiepiscopal province of York contained two sevenths of the population of England. At the time of the Revolution that province was believed to contain only one seventh of the population.<sup>2</sup> In Lancashire the number of inhabitants appears to have increased ninefold, while in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Northamptonshire it has hardly doubled.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Sir Walter Scott's Journal, 7th October, 1827, in his *Life* by Mr. Lockhart.

<sup>2</sup> Dalrymple, Appendix to Part II. Book I. The returns of the hearth money lead to nearly the same conclusion. The hearths in the province of York were not a sixth of the hearths of England.

<sup>3</sup> I do not, of course, pretend to strict accuracy here; but I believe that whoever will take the trouble to compare the last returns of hearth money in the reign of William the Third with the census of 1841, will come to a conclusion not very different from mine.

*The Revolution.* In 1688.

Of the taxation we can speak with more confidence and precision than of the population. The revenue of England, when Charles the Second died, was small, when compared with the resources which she even then possessed, or with the sums which were raised by the governments of the neighbouring countries. It had, from the time of the Restoration, been almost constantly increasing: yet it was little more than three fourths of the revenue of the United Provinces, and was hardly one fifth of the revenue of France.

The most important head of receipt was the excise, which, in the last year of the reign of Charles, produced five hundred and eighty-five thousand pounds, clear of all deductions. The net proceeds of the customs amounted in the same year to five hundred and thirty thousand pounds. These burdens did not lie very heavy on the nation. The tax on chimneys, though less productive, raised far louder murmurs. The discontent excited by direct imposts, is, indeed, almost always out of proportion to the quantity of money which they bring into the Exchequer; and the tax on chimneys was, even among direct imposts, peculiarly odious: for it could be levied only by means of domiciliary visits; and of such visits the English have always been impatient to a degree which the people of other countries can but faintly conceive. The poorer householders were frequently unable to pay their hearth money to the day. When this happened, their furniture was distrained without mercy:

*The Restoration.* In 1660.      *United Provinces.* Holland.

for the tax was farmed; and a farmer of taxes is, of all creditors, proverbially the most rapacious. The collectors were loudly accused of performing their unpopular duty with harshness and insolence. It was said that, as soon as they appeared at the threshold of a cottage, the children began to wail, and the old women ran to hide their earthenware. Nay, the single bed of a poor family had sometimes been carried away and sold. The net annual receipt from this tax was two hundred thousand pounds.<sup>1</sup>

When to the three great sources of income which have been mentioned we add the royal domains, then

<sup>1</sup> There are in the Pepysian Library some ballads of that age on the chimney money. I will give a specimen or two:

The good old dames, whenever they the chimney man espied,  
 Unto their nooks they haste away, their pots and pipkins hide.  
 There is not one old dame in ten, and search the nation  
 through,  
 But, if you talk of chimney men, will spare a curse or two.

Again,

Like plundering soldiers they'd enter the door,  
 And make a distress on the goods of the poor,  
 While frightened poor children distractedly cried:  
 This nothing abated their insolent pride.

In the British Museum there are doggerel verses composed on the same subject and in the same spirit:

Or, if through poverty it be not paid,  
 For cruelty to tear away the single bed,  
 On which the poor man rests his weary head,  
 At once deprives him of his rest and bread.

I take this opportunity, the first which occurs, of acknowledging most gratefully the kind and liberal manner in which the Master and Vicemaster of Magdalene College, Cambridge, gave me access to the valuable collections of Pepys.

far more extensive than at present, the first fruits and tenths, which had not yet been surrendered to the Church, the Duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster, the forfeitures and the fines, we shall find that the whole annual revenue of the crown may be fairly estimated at about fourteen hundred thousand pounds. Of this revenue part was hereditary: the rest had been granted to Charles for life; and he was at liberty to lay out the whole exactly as he thought fit. Whatever he could save by retrenching the expenditure of the public departments was an addition to his privy purse. Of the Post Office, more will hereafter be said. The profits of that establishment had been appropriated by Parliament to the Duke of York.

The King's revenue was, or rather ought to have been, charged with the payment of about eighty thousand pounds a year, the interest of the sum fraudulently detained in the Exchequer by the Cabal. While Danby was at the head of the finances, the creditors had received their dividends, though not with the strict punctuality of modern times: but those who had succeeded him at the Treasury had been less expert, or less solicitous to maintain public faith. Since the victory won by the court over the Whigs, not a farthing had been paid; and no redress was granted to the sufferers, till a new dynasty had

*First fruits.* First year's income of a benefice. *Tenths.* One-tenth of subsequent income.

*Forfeitures.* Property forfeited for treason, murder, felony.

*Fines.* Paid by tenants on entering into possession of land.

*Cabal.* Ministers or "Cabinet" of Charles II.

established a new system. There can be no greater error than to imagine that the device of meeting the exigencies of the state by loans was imported into our island by William the Third. From a period of immemorial antiquity it had been the practice of every English government to contract debts. What the Revolution introduced was the practice of honestly paying them.<sup>1</sup>

## II. ARMY AND NAVY AND CIVIL GOVERNMENT

By plundering the public creditor, it was possible to make an income of about fourteen hundred thousand pounds, with some occasional help from France, support the necessary charges of the government and the wasteful expenditure of the court. For that load which pressed most heavily on the finances of the great continental states was here scarcely felt. In France, Germany, and the Netherlands, armies, such as Henry the Fourth and Philip the Second had never employed in time of war, were kept up in the midst of peace. Bastions and ravelins were everywhere rising, constructed on principles unknown to Parma or Spinola. Stores of artillery and ammunition were accumulated, such as even Richelieu, whom the preceding generation had regarded as a worker of

<sup>1</sup> My chief authorities for this financial statement will be found in the *Commons' Journals*, 1st and 20th March, 1688/9.

prodigies, would have pronounced fabulous. No man could journey many leagues in those countries without hearing the drums of a regiment on march, or being challenged by the sentinels on the drawbridge of a fortress. In our island, on the contrary, it was possible to live long and to travel far, without being once reminded, by any martial sight or sound, that the defence of nations had become a science and a calling. The majority of Englishmen who were under twenty-five years of age had probably never seen a company of regular soldiers. Of the cities which, in the civil war, had valiantly repelled hostile armies, scarce one was now capable of sustaining a siege. The gates stood open night and day. The ditches were dry. The ramparts had been suffered to fall into decay, or were repaired only that the townsfolk might have a pleasant walk on summer evenings. Of the old baronial keeps many had been shattered by the cannon of Fairfax and Cromwell, and lay in heaps of ruin, overgrown with ivy. Those which remained had lost their martial character, and were now rural palaces of the aristocracy. The moats were turned into preserves of carp and pike. The mounds were planted with fragrant shrubs, through which spiral walks ran up to summer houses adorned with mirrors and paintings.<sup>1</sup> On the capes of the sea coast, and on many inland hills, were still seen tall posts, surmounted by barrels. Once those barrels had been filled with pitch. Watchmen had been set

<sup>1</sup> See for example the picture of the mound at Marlborough, in Stukeley's *Itinerarium Curiosum*.



round them in seasons of danger; and, within a few hours after a Spanish sail had been discovered in the Channel, or after a thousand Scottish mosstroopers had crossed the Tweed, the signal fires were blazing fifty miles off, and whole counties were rising in arms. But many years had now elapsed since the beacons had been lighted; and they were regarded rather as curious relics of ancient manners than as parts of a machinery necessary to the safety of the state.<sup>1</sup>

The only army which the law recognised was the militia. That force had been remodelled by two Acts of Parliament passed shortly after the Restoration. Every man who possessed five hundred pounds a year derived from land, or six thousand pounds of personal estate, was bound to provide, equip, and pay, at his own charge, one horseman. Every man who had fifty pounds a year derived from land, or six hundred pounds of personal estate, was charged in like manner with one pikeman or musketeer. Smaller proprietors were joined together in a kind of society, for which our language does not afford a special name, but which an Athenian would have called a *Synteleia*; and each society was required to furnish, according to its means, a horse soldier or a foot soldier. The whole number of cavalry and infantry thus maintained was popularly estimated at a hundred and thirty thousand men.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684.

<sup>2</sup> 13 and 14 Car. II. c. 3; 15 Car. II. c. 4. Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684.

The King was, by the ancient constitution of the realm, and by the recent and solemn acknowledgment of both Houses of Parliament, the sole Captain General of this large force. The Lord Lieutenants and their Deputies held the command under him, and appointed meetings for drilling and inspection. The time occupied by such meetings, however, was not to exceed fourteen days in one year. The Justices of the Peace were authorised to inflict slight penalties for breaches of discipline. Of the ordinary cost no part was paid by the crown: but, when the train-bands were called out against an enemy, their subsistence became a charge on the general revenue of the state, and they were subject to the utmost rigour of martial law.

There were those who looked on the militia with no friendly eye. Men who had travelled much on the Continent, who had marvelled at the stern precision with which every sentinel moved and spoke in the citadels built by Vauban, who had seen the mighty armies which poured along all the roads of Germany to chase the Ottoman from the gates of Vienna, and who had been dazzled by the well-ordered pomp of the household troops of Lewis, sneered much at the way in which the peasants of Devonshire and Yorkshire marched and wheeled, shouldered muskets and ported pikes. The enemies of the liberties and religion of England looked with aversion on a force which could not, without extreme risk, be employed against those liberties and that religion, and missed no opportunity of throwing

ridicule on the rustic soldiery.<sup>1</sup> Enlightened patriots, when they contrasted these rude levies with the battalions which, in time of war, a few hours might bring to the coast of Kent or Sussex, were forced to acknowledge that, dangerous as it might be to keep up a permanent military establishment, it might be more dangerous still to stake the honour and independence of the country on the result of a contest between ploughmen officered by Justices of the Peace, and veteran warriors led by Marshals of France. In Parliament, however, it was necessary to express such opinions with some reserve; for the militia was an institution eminently popular. Every reflection thrown on it excited the indignation of both the great parties in the state, and especially of that party which was distinguished by peculiar zeal for monarchy and for the Anglican Church. The array of the counties was commanded almost exclusively by Tory noblemen and gentlemen. They were proud of their military rank, and considered an insult offered to the service to which they belonged as

<sup>1</sup> Dryden, in his *Cymon and Iphigenia*, expressed, with his usual keenness and energy, the sentiments which had been fashionable among the sycophants of James the Second:

The country rings around with loud alarms,  
And raw in fields the rude militia swarms;  
Mouths without hands, maintained at vast expense,  
In peace a charge, in war a weak defence.  
Stout once a month they march, a blustering band,  
And ever, but in time of need, at hand.  
This was the morn when, issuing on the guard,  
Drawn up in rank and file, they stood prepared  
Of seeming arms to make a short essay,  
Then hasten to be drunk, the business of the day.

offered to themselves. They were also perfectly aware that whatever was said against a militia was said in favour of a standing army; and the name of standing army was hateful to them. One such army had held dominion in England; and under that dominion the King had been murdered, the nobility degraded, the landed gentry plundered, the Church persecuted. There was scarce a rural grandee who could not tell a story of wrongs and insults suffered by himself, or by his father, at the hands of the parliamentary soldiers. One old Cavalier had seen half his manor house blown up. The hereditary elms of another had been hewn down. A third could never go into his parish church without being reminded by the defaced scutcheons and headless statues of his ancestry, that Oliver's redcoats had once stabled their horses there. The consequence was that those very Royalists, who were most ready to fight for the King themselves, were the last persons whom he could venture to ask for the means of hiring regular troops.

Charles, however, had, a few months after his restoration, begun to form a small standing army. He felt that, without some better protection than that of the trainbands and beefeaters, his palace and person would hardly be secure, in the vicinity of a great city swarming with warlike Fifth Monarchy men who had just been disbanded. He therefore,

*Fifth Monarchy men.* Soldiers who believed that earthly kingdoms were about to pass away and that the kingdom of peace as foretold by Daniel was at hand.

careless and profuse as he was, contrived to spare from his pleasures a sum sufficient to keep up a body of guards. With the increase of trade and of public wealth his revenues increased; and he was thus enabled, in spite of the occasional murmurs of the Commons, to make gradual additions to his regular forces. One considerable addition was made a few months before the close of his reign. The costly, useless, and pestilential settlement of Tangier was abandoned to the barbarians who dwelt around it; and the garrison, consisting of one regiment of horse and two regiments of foot, was brought to England.

The little army thus formed by Charles the Second was the germ of that great and renowned army which has, in the present century, marched triumphant into Madrid and Paris, into Canton and Candahar. The Life Guards, who now form two regiments, were then distributed into three troops, each of which consisted of two hundred carabineers, exclusive of officers. This corps, to which the safety of the King and royal family was confided, had a very peculiar character. Even the privates were designated as gentlemen of the Guard. Many of them were of good families, and had held commissions in the civil war. Their pay was far higher than that of the most favoured regiment of our time, and would in that age have been thought a respectable provision for the younger son of a country squire. Their fine horses, their rich housings,

*The costly . . . Tangier.* This opinion of the value of Tangier is not now generally held.

their cuirasses, and their buff coats adorned with ribands, velvet, and gold lace, made a splendid appearance in St. James's Park. A small body of grenadier dragoons, who came from a lower class and received lower pay, was attached to each troop. Another body of household cavalry distinguished by blue coats and cloaks, and still called the Blues, was generally quartered in the neighbourhood of the capital. Near the capital lay also the corps which is now designated as the first regiment of dragoons, but which was then the only regiment of dragoons on the English establishment. It had recently been formed out of the cavalry who had returned from Tangier. A single troop of dragoons, which did not form part of any regiment, was stationed near Berwick, for the purpose of keeping the peace among the mosstroopers of the border. For this species of service the dragoon was then thought to be peculiarly qualified. He has since become a mere horse soldier. But in the seventeenth century he was accurately described by Montecuculi as a foot soldier who used a horse only in order to arrive with more speed at the place where military service was to be performed.

The household infantry consisted of two regiments, which were then, as now, called the first regiment of Foot Guards, and the Coldstream Guards. They generally did duty near Whitehall and St. James's Palace. As there were then no barracks, and as, by

*Montecuculi.* A famous Austrian General of the seventeenth century.

the Petition of Right, soldiers could not be quartered on private families, the redcoats filled all the ale-houses of Westminster and the Strand.

There were five other regiments of foot. One of these, called the Admiral's Regiment, was especially destined to service on board of the fleet. The remaining four still rank as the first four regiments of the line. Two of these represented two brigades which had long sustained on the Continent the fame of British valour. The first, or Royal regiment, had, under the great Gustavus, borne a conspicuous part in the deliverance of Germany. The third regiment, distinguished by flesh-coloured facings, from which it derived the well known name of the Buffs, had under Maurice of Nassau, fought not less bravely for the deliverance of the Netherlands. Both these gallant bands had at length, after many vicissitudes, been recalled from foreign service by Charles the Second, and had been placed on the English establishment.

The regiments which now rank as the second and fourth of the line had, in 1685, just returned from Tangier, bringing with them cruel and licentious habits contracted in a long course of warfare with the Moors. A few companies of infantry which had not been regimented lay in garrison at Tilbury Fort, at Portsmouth, at Plymouth, and at some other important stations on or near the coast.

Since the beginning of the seventeenth century a

*Petition of Right.* Drawn up in 1628 by the House of Commons against the arbitrary power of Charles I.



great change had taken place in the arms of the infantry. The pike had been gradually giving place to the musket; and, at the close of the reign of Charles the Second, most of his foot were musketeers. Still, however, there was a large intermixture of pikemen. Each class of troops was occasionally instructed in the use of the weapon which peculiarly belonged to the other class. Every foot soldier had at his side a sword for close fight. The dragoon was armed like a musketeer, and was also provided with a weapon which had, during many years, been gradually coming into use, and which the English then called a dagger, but which, from the time of our revolution, has been known among us by the French name of bayonet. The bayonet seems not to have been so formidable an instrument of destruction as it has since become; for it was inserted in the muzzle of the gun; and in action much time was lost while the soldier unfixed his bayonet in order to fire, and fixed it again in order to charge.

The regular army which was kept up in England at the beginning of the year 1685 consisted, all ranks included, of about seven thousand foot, and about seventeen hundred cavalry and dragoons. The whole charge amounted to about two hundred and ninety thousand pounds a year, less than a tenth part of what the military establishment of France then cost in time of peace. The daily pay of a private in the Life Guards was four shillings, in the Blues two shillings and sixpence, in the Dragoons eighteenpence, in the Foot Guards tenpence, and in the line eight-

pence. The discipline was lax, and indeed could not be otherwise. The common law of England knew nothing of courts martial, and made no distinction, in time of peace, between a soldier and any other subject; nor could the government then venture to ask even the most loyal Parliament for a Mutiny Bill. A soldier, therefore, by knocking down his colonel, incurred only the ordinary penalties of assault and battery, and by refusing to obey orders, by sleeping on guard, or by deserting his colours, incurred no legal penalty at all. Military punishments were doubtless inflicted during the reign of Charles the Second, but they were inflicted very sparingly, and in such a manner as not to attract public notice, or to produce an appeal to the courts of Westminster Hall.

Such an army as has been described was not very likely to enslave five millions of Englishmen. It would indeed have been hardly able to suppress an insurrection in London, if the trainbands of the City had joined the insurgents. Nor could the King expect that, if a rising took place in England, he would be able to obtain help from his other dominions. For, though both Scotland and Ireland supported separate military establishments, those establishments were not more than sufficient to keep down the Puritan malcontents of the former kingdom, and the Popish malcontents of the latter. The government had, however, an important military resource which must

*Mutiny Bill.* Passed in 1689 giving the Government disciplinary powers over the Army—now the Army (Annual) Act.

not be left unnoticed. There were in the pay of the United Provinces six fine regiments, formerly commanded by the brave Ossory. Of these regiments three had been raised in England and three in Scotland. Their native prince had reserved to himself the power of recalling them, if he needed their help against a foreign or domestic enemy. In the meantime they were maintained without any charge to him, and were kept under an excellent discipline, to which he could not have ventured to subject them.<sup>1</sup>

If the jealousy of the Parliament and of the nation made it impossible for the King to maintain a formidable standing army, no similar impediment prevented him from making England the first of maritime powers. Both Whigs and Tories were ready to applaud every step tending to increase the efficiency of that force which, while it was the best protection of the island against foreign enemies, was powerless against civil liberty. All the greatest exploits achieved within the memory of that generation by English soldiers had been achieved in war against English princes. The victories of our sailors had been won over foreign foes, and had averted havoc and rapine from our own soil. By at least half the nation the battle of Naseby was remembered

<sup>1</sup> Most of the materials which I have used for this account of the regular army will be found in the *Historical Records of Regiments*, published by command of King William the Fourth, and under the direction of the Adjutant General. See also Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684; *Abridgment of the English Military Discipline*, printed by especial command, 1685; *Exercise of Foot*, by their Majesties' command, 1690.

with horror, and the battle of Dunbar with pride chequered by many painful feelings: but the defeat of the Armada, and the encounters of Blake with the Hollanders and Spaniards, were recollected with unmixed exultation by all parties. Ever since the Restoration, the Commons, even when most discontented and most parsimonious, had always been bountiful even to profusion where the interest of the navy was concerned. It had been represented to them, while Danby was minister, that many of the vessels in the royal fleet were old and unfit for sea; and, although the House was, at that time, in no giving mood, an aid of near six hundred thousand pounds had been granted for the building of thirty new men of war.

But the liberality of the nation had been made fruitless by the vices of the government. The list of the King's ships, it is true, looked well. There were nine first rates, fourteen second rates, thirty-nine third rates, and many smaller vessels. The first rates, indeed, were less than the third rates of our time; and the third rates would not now rank as very large frigates. This force, however, if it had been efficient, would in those days have been regarded by the greatest potentate as formidable. But it existed only on paper. When the reign of Charles terminated, his navy had sunk into degradation and decay, such as would be almost incredible if it were not certified to us by the independent and concurring evidence of witnesses whose authority is beyond exception. Pepys, the ablest man in the

English Admiralty, drew up, in the year 1684, a memorial on the state of his department, for the information of Charles. A few months later Bonrepaux, the ablest man in the French Admiralty, having visited England for the especial purpose of ascertaining her maritime strength, laid the result of his inquiries before Lewis. The two reports are to the same effect. Bonrepaux declared that he found everything in disorder and in miserable condition, that the superiority of the French marine was acknowledged with shame and envy at Whitehall, and that the state of our shipping and dockyards was of itself a sufficient guarantee that we should not meddle in the disputes of Europe.<sup>1</sup> Pepys informed his master that the naval administration was a prodigy of wastefulness, corruption, ignorance and indolence, that no estimate could be trusted, that no contract was performed, that no check was enforced. The vessels which the recent liberality of Parliament had enabled the government to build, and which had never been out of harbour, had been made of such wretched timber that they were more unfit to go to sea than the old hulls which had been

<sup>1</sup> I refer to a despatch of Bonrepaux to Seignelay, dated Feb. 8/18th, 1686. It was transcribed for Mr. Fox from the French archives, during the peace of Amiens, and, with the other materials brought together by that great man, was intrusted to me by the kindness of the late Lady Holland, and of the present Lord Holland. I ought to add that, even in the midst of the troubles which have lately agitated Paris, I have found no difficulty in obtaining, from the liberality of the functionaries there, extracts supplying some chasms in Mr. Fox's collection.

battered thirty years before by Dutch and Spanish broadsides. Some of the new men of war, indeed, were so rotten that, unless speedily repaired, they would go down at their moorings. The sailors were paid with so little punctuality that they were glad to find some usurer who would purchase their tickets at forty per cent. discount. The commanders who had not powerful friends at court were even worse treated. Some officers, to whom large arrears were due, after vainly importuning the government during many years, had died for want of a morsel of bread.

Most of the ships which were afloat were commanded by men who had not been bred to the sea. This, it is true, was not an abuse introduced by the government of Charles. No state, ancient or modern, had, before that time, made a complete separation between the naval and military services. In the great civilised nations of the old world, Cimon and Lysander, Pompey and Agrippa, had fought battles by sea as well as by land. Nor had the impulse which nautical science received at the close of the fifteenth century produced any material improvement in the division of labour. At Flodden the right wing of the victorious army was led by the Admiral of England. At Jarnac and Moncontour the Huguenot ranks were marshalled by the Admiral of France. Neither John of Austria, the conqueror of Lepanto, nor Lord Howard of Effingham, to whose direction the marine

*Jarnac and Moncontour.* Victories of Catholics over Huguenots, 1569.

*Lepanto.* Defeat of the Turks by the Western Powers, 1571.



of England was entrusted when the Spanish invaders were approaching our shores, had received the education of a sailor. Raleigh, highly celebrated as a naval commander, had served during many years as a soldier in France, the Netherlands, and Ireland. Blake had distinguished himself by his skilful and valiant defence of an inland town before he humbled the pride of Holland and of Castile on the ocean. Since the Restoration the same system had been followed. Great fleets had been entrusted to the direction of Rupert and Monk; Rupert, who was renowned chiefly as a hot and daring cavalry officer, and Monk, who, when he wished his ship to change her course, moved the mirth of his crew by calling out, " Wheel to the left! "

But about this time wise men began to perceive that the rapid improvement, both of the art of war and of the art of navigation, made it necessary to draw the line between two professions which had hitherto been confounded. Either the command of a regiment or the command of a ship was now a matter quite sufficient to occupy the attention of a single mind. In the year 1672 the French government determined to educate young men of good family from a very early age specially for the sea service. But the English government, instead of following this excellent example, not only continued to distribute high naval commands among landmen, but selected for such commands landmen who, even on land, could not safely have been put in any important trust. Any lad of noble birth, any dissolute courtier



for whom one of the King's mistresses would speak a word, might hope that a ship of the line, and with it the honour of the country and the lives of hundreds of brave men, would be committed to his care. It mattered not that he had never in his life taken a voyage except on the Thames, that he could not keep his feet in a breeze, that he did not know the difference between latitude and longitude. No previous training was thought necessary; or, at most, he was sent to make a short trip in a man of war, where he was subjected to no discipline, where he was treated with marked respect, and where he lived in a round of revels and amusements. If, in the intervals of feasting, drinking and gambling, he succeeded in learning the meaning of a few technical phrases and the names of the points of the compass, he was fully qualified to take charge of a three-decker. This is no imaginary description. In 1666 John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, at seventeen years of age, volunteered to serve at sea against the Dutch. He passed six weeks on board, diverting himself, as well as he could, in the society of some young libertines of rank, and then returned home to take the command of a troop of horse. After this he was never on the water till the year 1672, when he again joined the fleet, and was almost immediately appointed Captain of a ship of eighty-four guns, reputed the finest in the navy. He was then twenty-three years old, and had not, in the whole course of his life, been three months afloat. As soon as he came back from sea he was made Colonel of a regiment of

foot. This is a specimen of the manner in which naval commands of the highest importance were then given; and a favourable specimen; for Mulgrave, though he wanted experience, wanted neither parts nor courage. Others were promoted in the same way who not only were not good officers, but who were intellectually and morally incapable of ever becoming good officers, and whose only recommendation was that they had been ruined by folly and vice. The chief bait which allured these men into the service was the profit of conveying bullion and other valuable commodities from port to port; for both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean were then so much infested by pirates from Barbary that merchants were not willing to trust precious cargoes to any custody but that of a man of war. A Captain in this way sometimes cleared several thousands of pounds by a short voyage; and for this lucrative business he too often neglected the interests of his country and the honour of his flag, made mean submissions to foreign powers, disobeyed the most direct injunctions of his superiors, lay in port when he was ordered to chase a Sallee rover, or ran with dollars to Leghorn when his instructions directed him to repair to Lisbon. And all this he did with impunity. The same interest which had placed him in a post for which he was unfit maintained him there. No Admiral, bearded by these corrupt and dissolute minions of the palace, dared to do more than mutter something about a court martial. If any officer

*Sallee rover.* Turkish pirates from North Coast of Africa.

showed a higher sense of duty than his fellows, he soon found that he lost money without acquiring honour. One Captain, who, by strictly obeying the orders of the Admiralty, missed a cargo which would have been worth four thousand pounds to him, was told by Charles, with ignoble levity, that he was a great fool for his pains.

The discipline of the navy was of a piece throughout. As the courtly Captain despised the Admiralty, he was in turn despised by his crew. It could not be concealed that he was inferior in seamanship to every foremast man on board. It was idle to expect that old sailors, familiar with the hurricanes of the tropics and with the icebergs of the Arctic Circle, would pay prompt and respectful obedience to a chief who knew no more of winds and waves than could be learned in a gilded barge between Whitehall Stairs and Hampton Court. To trust such a novice with the working of a ship was evidently impossible. The direction of the navigation was therefore taken from the Captain and given to the Master: but this partition of authority produced innumerable inconveniences. The line of demarcation was not, and perhaps could not be, drawn with precision. There was therefore constant wrangling. The Captain, confident in proportion to his ignorance, treated the Master with lordly contempt. The Master, well aware of the danger of disobliging the powerful, too often, after a struggle, yielded against his better judgment; and it was well if the loss of ship and crew was not the consequence. In general the least mischievous of the aristocratical

Captains were those who completely abandoned to others the direction of the vessels, and thought only of making money and spending it. The way in which these men lived was so ostentatious and voluptuous that, greedy as they were of gain, they seldom became rich. They dressed as if for a gala at Versailles, ate off plate, drank the richest wines, and kept harems on board, while hunger and scurvy raged amongst the crews, and while corpses were daily flung out of the portholes.

Such was the ordinary character of those who were then called gentlemen Captains. Mingled with them were to be found, happily for our country, naval commanders of a very different description, men whose whole life had been passed on the deep, and who had worked and fought their way from the lowest offices of the forecastle to rank and distinction. One of the most eminent of these officers was Sir Christopher Mings, who entered the service as a cabin boy, who fell fighting bravely against the Dutch, and whom his crew, weeping and vowing vengeance, carried to the grave. From him sprang, by a singular kind of descent, a line of valiant and expert sailors. His cabin boy was Sir John Narborough; and the cabin boy of Sir John Narborough was Sir Cloudesley Shovel. To the strong natural sense and dauntless courage of this class of men England owes a debt never to be forgotten. It was by such resolute hearts that, in spite of much maladministration, and in spite of the blunders of more courtly admirals, our

*His cabin boy, etc.* True in substance if not in actual fact.

coasts were protected and the reputation of our flag upheld during many gloomy and perilous years. But to a landsman these tarpaulins, as they were called, seemed a strange and half savage race. All their knowledge was professional; and their professional knowledge was practical rather than scientific. Off their own element they were as simple as children. Their deportment was uncouth. There was roughness in their very good nature; and their talk, where it was not made up of nautical phrases, was too commonly made up of oaths and curses. Such were the chiefs in whose rude school were formed those sturdy warriors from whom Smollett, in the next age, drew Lieutenant Bowling and Commodore Trunnion. But it does not appear that there was in the service of any of the Stuarts a single naval officer such as, according to the notions of our times, a naval officer ought to be, that is to say, a man versed in the theory and practice of his calling, and steeled against all the dangers of battle and tempest, yet of cultivated mind and polished manners. There were gentlemen and there were seamen in the navy of Charles the Second. But the seamen were not gentlemen; and the gentlemen were not seamen.

The English navy at that time might, according to the most exact estimates which have come down to us, have been kept in an efficient state for three hundred and eighty thousand pounds a year. Four hundred thousand pounds a year was the sum actually expended, but expended, as we have seen, to very little purpose. The cost of the French marine was

nearly the same; the cost of the Dutch marine considerably more.<sup>1</sup>

The charge of the English ordnance in the seventeenth century was, as compared with other military and naval charges, much smaller than at present. At most of the garrisons there were gunners, and here and there, at an important post, an engineer was to be found. But there was no regiment of artillery, no brigade of sappers and miners, no college in which young soldiers could learn the scientific part of war. The difficulty of moving field pieces was extreme. When a few years later, William marched from Devonshire to London, the apparatus which he brought with him, though such as had long been in constant use on the Continent, and such as would now be regarded at Woolwich as rude and cumbrous, excited in our ancestors an admiration resembling that which the Indians of America felt for the Castilian harquebusses. The stock of gunpowder kept in the English forts and arsenals was boastfully mentioned by patriotic writers as something which might

<sup>1</sup> My information respecting the condition of the navy, at this time, is chiefly derived from Pepys. His report, presented to Charles the Second in May, 1684, has never, I believe, been printed. The manuscript is at Magdalene College, Cambridge. At Magdalene College is also a valuable manuscript containing a detailed account of the maritime establishments of the country in December, 1684. Pepys's *Memoirs relating to the State of the Royal Navy for Ten Years, determined December, 1688*, and his diary and correspondence during his mission to Tangier, are in print. I have made large use of them. See also Sheffield's *Memoirs*, Teonge's *Diary*, Aubrey's *Life of Monk*, the *Life of Sir Cloudesley Shovel*, 1708, *Commons' Journals*, 1st and 20th March, 1688/9.



well impress neighbouring nations with awe. It amounted to fourteen or fifteen thousand barrels, about a twelfth of the quantity which it is now thought necessary to have always in store. The expenditure under the head of ordnance was on an average a little above sixty thousand pounds a year.<sup>1</sup>

The whole effective charge of the army, navy, and ordnance, was about seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds. The non-effective charge, which is now a heavy part of our public burdens, can hardly be said to have existed. A very small number of naval officers, who were not employed in the public service, drew half pay. No Lieutenant was on the list, nor any Captain who had not commanded a ship of the first or second rate. As the country then possessed only seventeen ships of the first and second rate that had ever been at sea, and as a large proportion of the persons who had commanded such ships had good posts on shore, the expenditure under this head must have been small indeed.<sup>2</sup> In the army, half pay was given merely as a special and temporary allowance to a small number of officers belonging to two regiments, which were peculiarly situated.<sup>3</sup> Greenwich

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684; *Commons' Journals*, 1st and 20th March, 1688/9. In 1833 it was determined, after full enquiry, that a hundred and seventy thousand barrels of gunpowder should constantly be kept in store; and this rule is still observed.

<sup>2</sup> It appears from the records of the Admiralty, that Flag officers were allowed half pay in 1668, Captains of first and second rates not till 1674.

<sup>3</sup> Warrant in the War Office Records, dated 26th March, 1678.

Hospital had not been founded. Chelsea Hospital was building: but the cost of that institution was defrayed partly by a deduction from the pay of the troops, and partly by private subscription. The King promised to contribute only twenty thousand pounds for architectural expenses, and five thousand a year for the maintenance of the invalids.<sup>1</sup> It was no part of the plan that there should be outpensioners. The whole non-effective charge, military and naval, can scarcely have exceeded ten thousand pounds a year. It now exceeds ten thousand pounds a day.

Of the expense of civil government only a small portion was defrayed by the crown. The great majority of the functionaries whose business was to administer justice and preserve order, either gave their services to the public gratuitously, or were remunerated in a manner which caused no drain on the revenue of the state. The sheriffs, mayors, and aldermen of the towns, the country gentlemen who were in the commission of the peace, the head-boroughs, bailiffs, and petty constables, cost the king nothing. The superior courts of law were chiefly supported by fees.

Our relations with foreign courts had been put on the most economical footing. The only diplomatic agent who had the title of Ambassador resided at Constantinople, and was partly supported by the Turkey Company. Even at the court of Versailles

<sup>1</sup> Evelyn's *Diary*, 27th January, 1682. I have seen a privy seal, dated 17th May, 1683, which confirms Evelyn's testimony.

*Turkey Company.* Levant or Turkey Company formed in 1581 to trade in the Near East.

England had only an Envoy; and she had not even an Envoy at the Spanish, Swedish, and Danish courts. The whole expense under this head cannot, in the last year of the reign of Charles the Second, have much exceeded twenty thousand pounds.<sup>1</sup>

In this frugality there was nothing laudable. Charles was, as usual, niggardly in the wrong place, and munificent in the wrong place. The public service was starved that courtiers might be pampered. The expense of the navy, of the ordnance, of pensions to needy old officers, of missions to foreign courts, must seem small indeed to the present generation. But the personal favourites of the sovereign, his ministers, and the creatures of those ministers, were gorged with public money. Their salaries and pensions, when compared with the incomes of the nobility, the gentry, the commercial and professional men of that age, will appear enormous. The greatest estates in the kingdom then very little exceeded twenty thousand a year. The Duke of Ormond had twenty-two thousand a year.<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Buckingham, before his extravagance had impaired his great property, had nineteen thousand six hundred a year.<sup>3</sup> George Monk, Duke of Albemarle, who had been rewarded for his eminent

<sup>1</sup> James the Second sent Envoys to Spain, Sweden, and Denmark; yet in his reign the diplomatic expenditure was little more than £30,000 a year. See the *Commons' Journals*, 20th March, 1688/9. Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684, 1687.

<sup>2</sup> Carte's *Life of Ormond*.

<sup>3</sup> Pepys's *Diary*, 14th February, 1668/9.

services with immense grants of crown land, and who had been notorious both for covetousness and for parsimony, left fifteen thousand a year of real estate, and sixty thousand pounds in money which probably yielded seven per cent.<sup>1</sup> These three Dukes were supposed to be three of the very richest subjects in England. The Archbishop of Canterbury can hardly have had five thousand a year.<sup>2</sup> The average income of a temporal peer was estimated, by the best informed persons, at about three thousand a year, the average income of a baronet at nine hundred a year, the average income of a member of the House of Commons at less than eight hundred a year.<sup>3</sup> A thousand a year was thought a large revenue for a barrister. Two thousand a year was hardly to be made in the Court of King's Bench, except by the crown lawyers.<sup>4</sup> It is evident, therefore, that an official man would have been well paid if he had received a fourth or fifth part of what would now be an adequate stipend. In fact, however, the stipends of the higher class of

<sup>1</sup> See the Report of the Bath and Montague case, which was decided by Lord Keeper Somers, in December, 1693.

<sup>2</sup> During three quarters of a year, beginning from Christmas 1689, the revenues of the see of Canterbury were received by an officer appointed by the crown. That officer's accounts are now in the British Museum. (Lansdowne MSS. 885.) The gross revenue for the three quarters was not quite four thousand pounds; and the difference between the gross and the net revenue was evidently something considerable.

<sup>3</sup> King's *Natural and Political Conclusions*. Davenant on the Balance of Trade. Sir W. Temple says, "The revenues of a House of Commons have seldom exceeded four hundred thousand pounds."—*Memoirs*, Third Part.

<sup>4</sup> Langton's *Conversations with Chief Justice Hale*, 1672.

official men were as large as at present, and not seldom larger. The Lord Treasurer, for example, had eight thousand a year, and, when the Treasury was in commission, the junior Lords had sixteen hundred a year each. The Paymaster of the Forces had a poundage, amounting to about five thousand a year, on all the money which passed through his hands. The Groom of the Stole had five thousand a year, the Commissioners of the Customs twelve hundred a year each, the Lords of the Bedchamber a thousand a year each.<sup>1</sup> The regular salary, however, was the smallest part of the gains of an official man of that age. From the noblemen who held the white staff and the great seal, down to the humblest tide-waiter and gauger, what would now be called gross corruption was practised without disguise and without reproach. Titles, places, commissions, pardons, were daily sold in market overt by the great dignitaries of the realm; and every clerk in every department imitated, to the best of his power, the evil example.

During the last century no prime minister, however powerful, has become rich in office; and several prime ministers have impaired their private fortune in sustaining their public character. In the seventeenth century, a statesman who was at the head of affairs might easily, and without giving scandal,

<sup>1</sup> *Commons' Journals*, 27th April, 1689; Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684.

*Groom of the Stole*. Officer of King's Household; probably the Chief Officer of the Bedchamber.

accumulate in no long time an estate amply sufficient to support a dukedom. It is probable that the income of the prime minister, during his tenure of power, far exceeded that of any other subject. The place of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland was supposed to be worth forty thousand pounds a year.<sup>1</sup> The gains of the Chancellor Clarendon, of Arlington, of Lauderdale, and of Danby, were enormous. The sumptuous palace to which the populace of London gave the name of Dunkirk House, the stately pavilions, the fishponds, the deer park and the orangery of Euston, the more than Italian luxury of Ham, with its busts, fountains, and aviaries, were among the many signs which indicated what was the shortest road to boundless wealth. That is the true explanation of the unscrupulous violence with which the statesmen of that day struggled for office, of the tenacity with which, in spite of vexations, humiliations and dangers, they clung to it, and of the scandalous compliances to which they stooped in order to retain it. Even in our own age, formidable as is the power of opinion, and high as is the standard of integrity, there would be great risk of a lamentable change in the character of our public men, if the place of first Lord of the Treasury or Secretary of State were worth a hundred thousand pounds a year. Happily for our country the emoluments of the highest class of functionaries have not only not grown in proportion to the general growth of our opulence, but have positively diminished.

<sup>1</sup> See the *Travels of the Grand Duke Cosmo*.



## III. AGRICULTURE

The fact that the sum raised in England by taxation has, in a time not exceeding two long lives, been multiplied thirtyfold, is strange, and may at first sight seem appalling. But those who are alarmed by the increase of the public burdens may perhaps be reassured when they have considered the increase of the public resources. In the year 1685, the value of the produce of the soil far exceeded the value of all the other fruits of human industry. Yet agriculture was in what would now be considered as a very rude and imperfect state. The arable land and pasture land were not supposed by the best political arithmeticians of that age to amount to much more than half the area of the kingdom.<sup>1</sup> The remainder was believed to consist of moor, forest, and fen. These computations are strongly confirmed by the road books and maps of the seventeenth century. From those books and maps it is clear that many routes which now pass through an endless succession of orchards, hayfields, and beanfields, then ran through nothing but heath, swamp, and warren.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> King's *Natural and Political Conclusions*. Davenant on the *Balance of Trade*.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Itinerarium Angliæ*, 1675, by John Ogilby, Cosmographer Royal. He describes great part of the land as wood, fen, heath on both sides, marsh on both sides. In some of his maps the roads through enclosed country are marked by lines, and the roads through unenclosed country by dots. The proportion of unenclosed country, which, if cultivated, must have been wretchedly cultivated, seems to

In the drawings of English landscapes made in that age for the Grand Duke Cosmo, scarce a hedgerow is to be seen, and numerous tracts, now rich with cultivation, appear as bare as Salisbury Plain.<sup>1</sup> At Enfield, hardly out of sight of the smoke of the capital, was a region of five and twenty miles in circumference, which contained only three houses and scarcely any enclosed fields. Deer, as free as in an American forest, wandered there by thousands.<sup>2</sup> It is to be remarked, that wild animals of large size were then far more numerous than at present. The last wild boars, indeed, which had been preserved for the royal diversion, and had been allowed to ravage the cultivated land with their tusks, had been slaughtered by the exasperated rustics during the licence of the civil war. The last wolf that has roamed our island had been slain in Scotland a short time before the close of the reign of Charles the Second. But many breeds, now extinct or rare, both of quadrupeds and birds, were still common. The fox, whose life is, in many counties, held almost as sacred as that of a human being, was considered as a mere nuisance. Oliver Saint John told the Long Parliament that Strafford was to be regarded, not as a stag or

have been very great. From Abingdon to Gloucester, for example, a distance of forty or fifty miles, there was not a single enclosure, and scarcely one enclosure between Biggleswade and Lincoln.

<sup>1</sup> Large copies of these highly interesting drawings are in the noble collection bequeathed by Mr. Grenville to the British Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Evelyn's *Diary*, 2nd June, 1675.

a hare, to whom some law was to be given, but as a fox, who was to be snared by any means, and knocked on the head without pity. This illustration would be by no means a happy one, if addressed to country gentlemen of our time: but in Saint John's days there were not seldom great massacres of foxes to which the peasantry thronged with all the dogs that could be mustered: traps were set; nets were spread; no quarter was given; and to shoot a female with cub was considered as a feat which merited the gratitude of the neighbourhood. The red deer were then as common in Gloucestershire and Hampshire as they now are among the Grampian Hills. On one occasion Queen Anne, on her way to Portsmouth, saw a herd of no less than five hundred. The wild bull with his white mane was still to be found wandering in a few of the southern forests. The badger made his dark and tortuous hole on the side of every hill where the copsewood grew thick. The wild cats were frequently heard by night wailing round the lodges of the rangers of Whittlebury and Needwood. The yellow-breasted marten was still pursued in Cranbourne Chase for his fur, reputed inferior only to that of the sable. Fen eagles, measuring more than nine feet between the extremities of the wings, preyed on fish along the coast of Norfolk. On all the downs, from the British Channel to Yorkshire, huge bustards strayed in troops of fifty or sixty, and were often hunted with greyhounds. The marshes of Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire were covered during some months of every year by immense clouds of

cranes. Some of these races the progress of cultivation has extirpated. Of others the numbers are so much diminished that men crowd to gaze at a specimen as at a Bengal tiger, or a Polar bear.<sup>1</sup>

The progress of this great change can nowhere be more clearly traced than in the Statute Book. The number of enclosure Acts passed since King George the Second came to the throne exceeds four thousand. The area enclosed under the authority of those Acts exceeds, on a moderate calculation, ten thousand square miles. How many square miles, which were formerly uncultivated or ill cultivated, have, during the same period, been fenced and carefully tilled by the proprietors, without any application to the legislature, can only be conjectured. But it seems highly probable that a fourth part of England has been, in the course of a little more than a century, turned from a wild into a garden.

Even in those parts of the kingdom which at the close of the reign of Charles the Second were the best cultivated, the farming, though greatly improved since the civil war, was not such as would now be thought skilful. To this day no effectual steps have been taken by public authority for the purpose of obtaining accurate accounts of the produce of the English soil. The historian must therefore follow,

<sup>1</sup> See White's *Selborne*; Bell's *History of British Quadrupeds*; *Gentleman's Recreation*, 1686; Aubrey's *Natural History of Wiltshire*, 1685; Morton's *History of Northamptonshire*, 1712; Willoughby's *Ornithology*, by Ray, 1678; Latham's *General Synopsis of Birds*; and Sir Thomas Browne's *Account of Birds found in Norfolk*.

with some misgivings, the guidance of those writers on statistics whose reputation for diligence and fidelity stands highest. At present an average crop of wheat, rye, barley, oats, and beans, is supposed considerably to exceed thirty millions of quarters. The crop of wheat would be thought wretched if it did not exceed twelve millions of quarters. According to the computation made in the year 1696 by Gregory King, the whole quantity of wheat, rye, barley, oats, and beans, then annually grown in the kingdom, was somewhat less than ten millions of quarters. The wheat, which was then cultivated only on the strongest clay, and consumed only by those who were in easy circumstances, he estimated at less than two millions of quarters. Charles Davenant, an acute and well informed though most unprincipled and rancorous politician, differed from King as to some of the items of the account, but came to nearly the same general conclusions.<sup>1</sup>

The rotation of crops was very imperfectly understood. It was known, indeed, that some vegetables lately introduced into our island, particularly the turnip, afforded excellent nutriment in winter to sheep and oxen: but it was not yet the practice to feed cattle in this manner. It was therefore by no means easy to keep them alive during the season when the grass is scanty. They were killed and salted in great numbers at the beginning of the cold weather; and, during several months, even the gentry tasted

<sup>1</sup> King's *Natural and Political Conclusions*. Davenant on the *Balance of Trade*.

scarcely any fresh animal food, except game and river fish, which were consequently much more important articles in housekeeping than at present. It appears from the Northumberland Household Book that, in the reign of Henry the Seventh, fresh meat was never eaten even by the gentlemen attendant on a great Earl, except during the short interval between Midsummer and Michaelmas. But in the course of two centuries an improvement had taken place; and under Charles the Second it was not till the beginning of November that families laid in their stock of salt provisions, then called Martinmas beef.<sup>1</sup>

The sheep and the ox of that time were diminutive when compared with the sheep and oxen which are now driven to our markets.<sup>2</sup> Our native horses, though serviceable, were held in small esteem, and fetched low prices. They were valued, one with another, by the ablest of those who computed the national wealth, at not more than fifty shillings each. Foreign breeds were greatly preferred. Spanish jennets were regarded as the finest chargers, and were imported for purposes of pageantry and war. The coaches of the aristocracy were drawn by grey Flemish mares, which trotted, as it was thought, with a peculiar grace, and endured better than any cattle reared in our island the work of dragging a ponderous equipage over the rugged pavement of London. Neither the modern dray horse nor the modern race

<sup>1</sup> See the Almanacks of 1684 and 1685.

<sup>2</sup> See Mr. M'Culloch's *Statistical Account of the British Empire*, Part III. chap. i. sec. 6.



horse was then known. At a much later period the ancestors of the gigantic quadrupeds, which all foreigners now class among the chief wonders of London, were brought from the marshes of Walcheren; the ancestors of Childers and Eclipse from the sands of Arabia. Already, however, there was among our nobility and gentry a passion for the amusements of the turf. The importance of improving our studs by an infusion of new blood was strongly felt; and with this view a considerable number of barbs had lately been brought into the country. Two men whose authority on such subjects was held in great esteem, the Duke of Newcastle and Sir John Fenwick, pronounced that the meanest hack ever imported from Tangier would produce a finer progeny than could be expected from the best sire of our native breed. They would not readily have believed that a time would come when the princes and nobles of neighbouring lands would be as eager to obtain horses from England as ever the English had been to obtain horses from Barbary.<sup>1</sup>

The increase of vegetable and animal produce,

<sup>1</sup> King and Davenant as before; The Duke of Newcastle on *Horsemanship*; *Gentleman's Recreation*, 1686. The "dappled Flanders mares" were marks of greatness in the time of Pope, and even later.

The vulgar proverb, that the grey mare is the better horse, originated, I suspect, in the preference generally given to the grey mares of Flanders over the finest coach horses of England.

*Childers and Eclipse*. Famous racehorses of the eighteenth century.

though great, seems small when compared with the increase of our mineral wealth. In 1685 the tin of Cornwall, which had, more than two thousand years before, attracted the Tyrian sails beyond the pillars of Hercules, was still one of the most valuable subterranean productions of the island. The quantity annually extracted from the earth was found to be, some years later, sixteen hundred tons, probably about a third of what it now is.<sup>1</sup> But the veins of copper which lie in the same region were, in the time of Charles the Second, altogether neglected, nor did any landowner take them into the account in estimating the value of his property. Cornwall and Wales at present yield annually near fifteen thousand tons of copper, worth near a million and a half sterling; that is to say, worth about twice as much as the annual produce of all English mines of all descriptions in the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> The first bed of rock salt had been discovered not long after the Restoration in Cheshire, but does not appear to have been worked in that age. The salt which was obtained by a rude process from brine pits was held in no high estimation. The pans in which the manufacture was carried on exhaled a sulphurous stench; and,

<sup>1</sup> See a curious note by Tonkin, in Lord De Dunstanville's edition of Carew's *Survey of Cornwall*.

<sup>2</sup> Borlase's *Natural History of Cornwall*, 1758. The quantity of copper now produced, I have taken from parliamentary returns. Davenant, in 1700, estimated the annual produce of all the mines of England at between seven and eight hundred thousand pounds.

*Pillars of Hercules.* Rocks of Gibraltar and Ceuta at the entrance of the Mediterranean.

when the evaporation was complete, the substance which was left was scarcely fit to be used with food. Physicians attributed the scorbutic and pulmonary complaints which were common among the English to this unwholesome condiment. It was therefore seldom used by the upper and middle classes; and there was a regular and considerable importation from France. At present our springs and mines not only supply our own immense demand, but send annually more than seven hundred millions of pounds of excellent salt to foreign countries.<sup>1</sup>

Far more important has been the improvement of our iron works. Such works had long existed in our island, but had not prospered, and had been regarded with no favourable eye by the government and by the public. It was not then the practice to employ coal for smelting the ore; and the rapid consumption of wood excited the alarm of politicians. As early as the reign of Elizabeth there had been loud complaints that whole forests were cut down for the purpose of feeding the furnaces: and the parliament had interfered to prohibit the manufacturers from burning timber. The manufacture consequently languished. At the close of the reign of Charles the Second, great part of the iron which was used in the country was imported from abroad; and the whole quantity cast here annually seems not to have exceeded ten thousand tons. At present the trade is thought to be in

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophical Transactions*, No. 53, November, 1669; No. 66, December, 1670; No. 103, May, 1674; No. 156, February, 1683/4.

a depressed state if less than a million of tons are produced in a year.<sup>1</sup>

One mineral, perhaps more important than iron itself, remains to be mentioned. Coal, though very little used in any species of manufacture, was already the ordinary fuel in some districts which were fortunate enough to possess large beds, and in the capital, which could easily be supplied by water carriage. It seems reasonable to believe that at least one half of the quantity then extracted from the pits was consumed in London. The consumption of London seemed to the writers of that age enormous, and was often mentioned by them as a proof of the greatness of the imperial city. They scarcely hoped to be believed when they affirmed that two hundred and eighty thousand chaldrons, that is to say, about three hundred and fifty thousand tons, were, in the last year of the reign of Charles the Second, brought to the Thames. At present near three million and a half of tons are required yearly by the metropolis; and the whole annual produce cannot, on the most moderate computation, be estimated at less than thirty millions of tons.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yarranton, *England's Improvement by Sea and Land*, 1677; Porter's *Progress of the Nation*. See also a remarkably perspicuous history, in small compass, of the English iron works, in Mr. M'Culloch's *Statistical Account of the British Empire*.

<sup>2</sup> See Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684, 1687; *Angliæ Metropolis*, 1691; M'Culloch's *Statistical Account of the British Empire*, Part III. chap. ii. (edition of 1847). In 1845 the quantity of coal brought into London appeared, by the parliamentary returns, to be 3,460,000 tons.

While these great changes have been in progress, the rent of land has, as might be expected, been almost constantly rising. In some districts it has multiplied more than tenfold. In some it has not more than doubled. It has probably, on the average, quadrupled.

#### IV. THE COUNTRY GENTRY AND CLERGY

Of the rent, a large proportion was divided among the country gentlemen, a class of persons whose position and character it is most important that we should clearly understand; for by their influence and by their passions the fate of the nation was, at several important conjunctures, determined.

We should be much mistaken if we pictured to ourselves the squires of the seventeenth century as men bearing a close resemblance to their descendants, the county members and chairmen of quarter sessions with whom we are familiar. The modern country gentleman generally receives a liberal education, passes from a distinguished school to a distinguished college, and has every opportunity to become an excellent scholar. He has generally seen something of foreign countries. A considerable part of his life has generally been passed in the capital; and the refinements of the capital follow him into the country. There is perhaps no class of dwellings so pleasing as the rural estates of the English gentry. In the parks and pleasure grounds, nature, dressed yet not disguised by art,

wears her most alluring form. In the buildings, good sense and good taste combine to produce a happy union of the comfortable and the graceful. The pictures, the musical instruments, the library, would in any other country be considered as proving the owner to be an eminently polished and accomplished man. A country gentleman who witnessed the Revolution was probably in receipt of about a fourth part of the rent which his acres now yield to his posterity. He was, therefore, as compared with his posterity, a poor man, and was generally under the necessity of residing, with little interruption, on his estate. To travel on the Continent, to maintain an establishment in London, or even to visit London frequently, were pleasures in which only the great proprietors could indulge. It may be confidently affirmed that of the squires whose names were then in the Commissions of Peace and Lieutenancy not one in twenty went to town once in five years, or had ever in his life wandered so far as Paris. Many lords of manors had received an education differing little from that of their menial servants. The heir of an estate often passed his boyhood and youth at the seat of his family with no better tutors than grooms and gamekeepers, and scarce attained learning enough to sign his name to a *Mittimus*. If he went to school and to college, he generally returned before he was twenty to the seclusion of the old hall, and there,

*Commissions of Peace and Lieutenancy.* Royal Authority appointing magistrates.

*Mittimus.* Order of a Magistrate committing a criminal to prison.



unless his mind were very happily constituted by nature, soon forgot his academical pursuits in rural business and pleasures. His chief serious employment was the care of his property. He examined samples of grain, handled pigs, and, on market days, made bargains over a tankard with drovers and hop merchants. His chief pleasures were commonly derived from field sports and from an unrefined sensuality. His language and pronunciation were such as we should now expect to hear only from the most ignorant clowns. His oaths, coarse jests, and scurrilous terms of abuse, were uttered with the broadest accent of his province. It was easy to discern, from the first words which he spoke, whether he came from Somersetshire or Yorkshire. He troubled himself little about decorating his abode, and, if he attempted decoration, seldom produced anything but deformity. The litter of a farmyard gathered under the windows of his bedchamber, and the cabbage and gooseberry bushes grew close to his hall door. His table was loaded with coarse plenty; and guests were cordially welcomed to it. But, as the habit of drinking to excess was general in the class to which he belonged, and as his fortune did not enable him to intoxicate large assemblies daily with claret or canary, strong beer was the ordinary beverage. The quantity of beer consumed in those days was indeed enormous. For beer then was to the middle and lower classes, not only all that beer now is, but all that wine, tea, and ardent spirits now are. It was only at great houses, or on great occasions,

that foreign drink was placed on the board. The ladies of the house, whose business it had commonly been to cook the repast, retired as soon as the dishes had been devoured, and left the gentlemen to their ale and tobacco. The coarse jollity of the afternoon was often prolonged till the revellers were laid under the table.

It was very seldom that the country gentleman caught glimpses of the great world; and what he saw of it tended rather to confuse than to enlighten his understanding. His opinions respecting religion, government, foreign countries and former times, having been derived, not from study, from observation, or from conversation with enlightened companions, but from such traditions as were current in his own small circle, were the opinions of a child. He adhered to them, however, with the obstinacy which is generally found in ignorant men accustomed to be fed with flattery. His animosities were numerous and bitter. He hated Frenchmen and Italians, Scotchmen and Irishmen, Papists and Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists, Quakers and Jews. Towards London and Londoners he felt an aversion which more than once produced important political effects. His wife and daughter were in tastes and acquirements below a housekeeper or a stillroom maid of the present day. They stitched and spun, brewed gooseberry wine, cured marigolds, and made the crust for the venison pasty.

From this description it might be supposed that the English esquire of the seventeenth century did

not materially differ from a rustic miller or alehouse keeper of our time. There are, however, some important parts of his character still to be noted, which will greatly modify this estimate. Unlettered as he was and unpolished, he was still in some most important points a gentleman. He was a member of a proud and powerful aristocracy, and was distinguished by many both of the good and of the bad qualities which belong to aristocrats. His family pride was beyond that of a Talbot or a Howard. He knew the genealogies and coats of arms of all his neighbours, and could tell which of them had assumed supporters without any right, and which of them were so unfortunate as to be great grandsons of aldermen. He was a magistrate, and, as such, administered gratuitously to those who dwelt around him a rude patriarchal justice, which, in spite of innumerable blunders and of occasional acts of tyranny, was yet better than no justice at all. He was an officer of the trainbands; and his military dignity, though it might move the mirth of gallants who had served a campaign in Flanders, raised his character in his own eyes and in the eyes of his neighbours. Nor indeed was his soldiery justly a subject of derision. In every county there were elderly gentlemen who had seen service which was no child's play. One had been knighted by Charles the First, after the battle of Edgehill. Another still wore a patch over the scar which he had received at Naseby. A third had defended his old house till Fairfax had blown in the door with a petard. The presence of these old Cava-

liers, with their old swords and holsters, and with their old stories about Goring and Lunsford, gave to the musters of militia an earnest and warlike aspect which would otherwise have been wanting. Even those country gentlemen who were too young to have themselves exchanged blows with the cuirassiers of the Parliament had, from childhood, been surrounded by the traces of recent war, and fed with stories of the martial exploits of their fathers and uncles. Thus the character of the English esquire of the seventeenth century was compounded of two elements which we are not accustomed to find united. His ignorance and uncouthness, his low tastes and gross phrases, would, in our time, be considered as indicating a nature and a breeding thoroughly plebeian. Yet he was essentially a patrician, and had, in large measure, both the virtues and the vices which flourish among men set from their birth in high place, and accustomed to authority, to observance, and to self-respect. It is not easy for a generation which is accustomed to find chivalrous sentiments only in company with liberal studies and polished manners to image to itself a man with the deportment, the vocabulary, and the accent of a carter, yet punctilious on matters of genealogy and precedence, and ready to risk his life rather than see a stain cast on the honour of his house. It is however only by thus joining together things seldom or never found together in our own experience, that we can form a just idea of that rustic aristocracy which constituted the main strength of the armies of

Charles the First, and which long supported, with strange fidelity, the interest of his descendants.

The gross, uneducated, untravelled country gentleman was commonly a Tory: but, though devotedly attached to hereditary monarchy, he had no partiality for courtiers and ministers. He thought, not without reason, that Whitehall was filled with the most corrupt of mankind; that of the great sums which the House of Commons had voted to the crown since the Restoration part had been embezzled by cunning politicians, and part squandered on buffoons and foreign courtesans. His stout English heart swelled with indignation at the thought that the government of his country should be subject to French dictation. Being himself generally an old Cavalier, or the son of an old Cavalier, he reflected with bitter resentment on the ingratitude with which the Stuarts had requited their best friends. Those who heard him grumble at the neglect with which he was treated, and at the profusion with which wealth was lavished on the bastards of Nell Gwynn and Madam Carwell, would have supposed him ripe for rebellion. But all this ill humour lasted only till the throne was really in danger. It was precisely when those whom the sovereign had loaded with wealth and honours shrank from his side that the country gentlemen, so surly and mutinous in the season of his prosperity, rallied round him in a body. Thus, after murmuring twenty years at the misgovernment of Charles the Second, they came to his rescue in his extremity, when his own Secretaries of State and Lords of the Treasury had

deserted him, and enabled him to gain a complete victory over the opposition; nor can there be any doubt that they would have shown equal loyalty to his brother James, if James would, even at the last moment, have refrained from outraging their strongest feeling. For there was one institution, and one only, which they prized even more than hereditary monarchy; and that institution was the Church of England. Their love of the Church was not, indeed, the effect of study or meditation. Few among them could have given any reason, drawn from Scripture or ecclesiastical history, for adhering to her doctrines, her ritual, and her polity; nor were they, as a class, by any means strict observers of that code of morality which is common to all Christian sects. But the experience of many ages proves that men may be ready to fight to the death, and to persecute without pity, for a religion whose creed they do not understand, and whose precepts they habitually disobey.<sup>1</sup>

The rural clergy were even more vehement in Toryism than the rural gentry, and were a class scarcely less important. It is to be observed, however, that the individual clergyman, as compared with the individual gentleman, then ranked much lower than in our days. The main support of the Church was derived from the tithe; and the tithe

<sup>1</sup> My notion of the country gentleman of the seventeenth century has been derived from sources too numerous to be recapitulated. I must leave my description to the judgment of those who have studied the history and the lighter literature of that age.



bore to the rent a much smaller ratio than at present. King estimated the whole income of the parochial and collegiate clergy at only four hundred and eighty thousand pounds a year; Davenant at only five hundred and forty-four thousand a year. It is certainly now more than seven times as great as the larger of these two sums. The average rent of the land has not, according to any estimate, increased proportionally. It follows that rectors and vicars must have been, as compared with the neighbouring knights and squires, much poorer in the seventeenth than in the nineteenth century.

The place of the clergyman in society had been completely changed by the Reformation. Before that event, ecclesiastics had formed the majority of the House of Lords, had, in wealth and splendour, equalled, and sometimes outshone, the greatest of the temporal barons, and had generally held the highest civil offices. The Lord Treasurer was often a Bishop. The Lord Chancellor was almost always so. The Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal and the Master of the Rolls were ordinarily churchmen. Churchmen transacted the most important diplomatic business. Indeed, almost all that large portion of the administration which rude and warlike nobles were incompetent to conduct was considered as especially belonging to divines. Men, therefore, who were averse to the life of camps, and who were, at the same time, desirous to rise in the state, ordinarily received the tonsure. Among them were sons of all the most illustrious families, and near kinsmen

of the throne, Scroops and Nevilles, Bouchiers, Staffords, and Poles. To the religious houses belonged the rents of immense domains, and all that large portion of the tithe which is now in the hands of laymen. Down to the middle of the reign of Henry the Eighth, therefore, no line of life bore so inviting an aspect to ambitious and covetous natures as the priesthood. Then came a violent revolution. The abolition of the monasteries deprived the Church at once of the greater part of her wealth, and of her predominance in the Upper House of Parliament. There was no longer an Abbot of Glastonbury or an Abbot of Reading seated among the peers, and possessed of revenues equal to those of a powerful Earl. The princely splendour of William of Wykeham and of William of Waynflete had disappeared. The scarlet hat of the Cardinal, the silver cross of the Legate, were no more. The clergy had also lost the ascendancy which is the natural reward of superior mental cultivation. Once the circumstance that a man could read had raised a presumption that he was in orders. But, in an age which produced such laymen as William Cecil and Nicholas Bacon, Roger Ascham and Thomas Smith, Walter Mildmay and Francis Walsingham, there was no reason for calling away prelates from their dioceses to negotiate treaties, to superintend the finances, or to administer justice. The spiritual character not only ceased to be a qualification for high civil office, but began to be regarded as a disqualification. Those worldly motives, therefore, which had formerly induced so

many able, aspiring, and high born youths to assume the ecclesiastical habit, ceased to operate. Not one parish in two hundred then afforded what a man of family considered as a maintenance. There were still indeed prizes in the Church: but they were few; and even the highest were mean, when compared with the glory which had once surrounded the princes of the hierarchy. The state kept by Parker and Grindal seemed beggarly to those who remembered the imperial pomp of Wolsey, his palaces, which had become the favourite abodes of royalty, Whitehall and Hampton Court, the three sumptuous tables daily spread in his refectory, the forty-four gorgeous copes in his chapel, his running footmen in rich liveries, and his body guards with gilded poleaxes. Thus the sacerdotal office lost its attraction for the higher classes. During the century which followed the accession of Elizabeth, scarce a single person of noble descent took orders. At the close of the reign of Charles the Second, two sons of peers were Bishops; four or five sons of peers were priests, and held valuable preferment: but these rare exceptions did not take away the reproach which lay on the body. The clergy were regarded as, on the whole, a plebeian class. And, indeed, for one who made the figure of a gentleman, ten were mere menial servants. A large proportion of those divines who had no benefices, or whose benefices were too small to afford a comfortable revenue, lived in the houses of laymen. It had

*Parker and Grindal.* Archbishops of Canterbury in the sixteenth century.

long been evident that this practice tended to degrade the priestly character. Laud had exerted himself to effect a change; and Charles the First had repeatedly issued positive orders that none but men of high rank should presume to keep domestic chaplains.<sup>1</sup> But these injunctions had become obsolete. Indeed, during the domination of the Puritans, many of the ejected ministers of the Church of England could obtain bread and shelter only by attaching themselves to the households of royalist gentlemen; and the habits which had been formed in those times of trouble continued long after the re-establishment of monarchy and episcopacy. In the mansions of men of liberal sentiments and cultivated understandings, the chaplain was doubtless treated with urbanity and kindness. His conversation, his literary assistance, his spiritual advice, were considered as an ample return for his food, his lodging, and his stipend. But this was not the general feeling of the country gentlemen. The coarse and ignorant squire who thought that it belonged to his dignity to have grace said every day at his table by an ecclesiastic in full canonicals, found means to reconcile dignity with economy. A young Levite—such was the phrase then in use—might be had for his board, a small garret, and ten pounds a year, and might not only perform his own professional functions, might not only be the most patient of butts and of listeners, might not only be always ready in fine weather for bowls, and in rainy weather for shovelboard, but

<sup>1</sup> See Heylin's *Cyprianus Anglicus*.

might also save the expense of a gardener, or of a groom. Sometimes the reverend man nailed up the apricots, and sometimes he curried the coach horses. He cast up the farrier's bills. He walked ten miles with a message or a parcel. He was permitted to dine with the family; but he was expected to content himself with the plainest fare. He might fill himself with the corned beef and the carrots: but, as soon as the tarts and the cheesecakes made their appearance, he quitted his seat, and stood aloof till he was summoned to return thanks for the repast, from a great part of which he had been excluded.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps, after some years of service, he was presented to a living sufficient to support him: but he often found it necessary to purchase his preferment by a species of Simony, which furnished an inexhaustible subject of pleasantry to three or four generations of scoffers. With his cure he was expected to take a wife. The wife had ordinarily been in the patron's service; and it was well if she was not suspected of standing too high in the patron's favour. Indeed, the nature of the matrimonial connections which the clergymen of that age were in the habit of forming is the most certain indication of the place which the order held in the social system. An Oxonian, writing a few months after the death of Charles the Second, complained bitterly, not only

<sup>1</sup> Eachard, *Causes of the Contempt of the Clergy*; Oldham, *Satire addressed to a Friend about to leave the University*; *Tatler*, 255, 258. That the English clergy were a lowborn class, is remarked in the *Travels of the Grand Duke Cosmo*, Appendix A.

that the country attorney and the country apothecary looked down with disdain on the country clergyman, but that one of the lessons most earnestly inculcated on every girl of honourable family was to give no encouragement to a lover in orders, and that, if any young lady forgot this precept, she was almost as much disgraced as by an illicit amour. Clarendon, who assuredly bore no ill will to the Church, mentions it as a sign of the confusion of ranks which the great rebellion had produced, that some damsels of noble families had bestowed themselves on divines.<sup>1</sup> A waiting woman was generally considered as the most suitable helpmate for a parson. Queen Elizabeth, as head of the Church, had given what seemed to be a formal sanction to this prejudice, by issuing special orders that no clergyman should presume to marry a servant girl, without the consent of the master or mistress.<sup>2</sup> During several generations accordingly the relation between priests and hand-maidens was a theme for endless jest; nor would it be easy to find, in the comedy of the seventeenth century, a single instance of a clergyman who wins a spouse above the rank of a cook.<sup>3</sup> Even so late as the time of George the Second, the keenest of all observers of life and manners, himself a priest,

<sup>1</sup> Clarendon's *Life*, ii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> See the Injunctions of 1559, in Bishop Sparrow's Collection. Jeremy Collier, in his Essay on *Pride*, speaks of this injunction with a bitterness which proves that his own pride had not been effectually tamed.

<sup>3</sup> Roger and Abigail in Fletcher's *Scornful Lady*, Bull and the Nurse in Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, Smirk and Susan in Shadwell's *Lancashire Witches*, are instances.



remarked that, in a great household, the chaplain was the resource of a lady's maid whose character had been blown upon, and who was therefore forced to give up hopes of catching the steward.<sup>1</sup>

In general the divine who quitted his chaplainship for a benefice and a wife found that he had only exchanged one class of vexations for another. Not one living in fifty enabled the incumbent to bring up a family comfortably. As children multiplied and grew, the household of the priest became more and more beggarly. Holes appeared more and more plainly in the thatch of his parsonage and in his single cassock. Often it was only by toiling on his glebe, by feeding swine, and by loading dungcarts, that he could obtain daily bread; nor did his utmost exertions always prevent the bailiffs from taking his concordance and his inkstand in execution. It was a white day on which he was admitted into the kitchen of a great house, and regaled by the servants with cold meat and ale. His children were brought up like the children of the neighbouring peasantry. His boys followed the plough; and his girls went out to service. Study he found impossible: for the advowson of his living would hardly have sold for a sum sufficient to purchase a good theological library; and he might be considered as unusually lucky if he had ten or twelve dog-eared volumes among the pots and pans on his shelves. Even a

<sup>1</sup> Swift's *Directions to Servants*.

*White day.* Allusion to the Roman custom of using a white stone to mark their lucky days; cf. holidays and saints' days marked by red letters in old calendars.

keen and strong intellect might be expected to rust in so unfavourable a situation.

Assuredly there was at that time no lack in the English Church of ministers distinguished by abilities and learning. But it is to be observed that these ministers were not scattered among the rural population. They were brought together at a few places where the means of acquiring knowledge were abundant, and where the opportunities of vigorous intellectual exercise were frequent.<sup>1</sup> At such places were to be found divines qualified by parts, by eloquence, by wide knowledge of literature, of science, and of life, to defend their Church victoriously against heretics and sceptics, to command the attention of frivolous and worldly congregations, to guide the deliberations of senates, and to make religion respectable, even in the most dissolute of courts. Some laboured to fathom the abysses of metaphysical theology; some were deeply versed in biblical criticism; and some threw light on the darkest parts of ecclesiastical history. Some proved themselves consummate masters of logic. Some cultivated rhetoric with such assiduity and success that their discourses are still justly valued as models of style. These eminent men were to be found, with scarce a single exception, at the Universities, at the great Cathedrals, or in the capital. Barrow had lately died at Cambridge; and Pearson had gone

<sup>1</sup> This distinction between country clergy and town clergy is strongly marked by Eachard, and cannot but be observed by every person who has studied the ecclesiastical history of that age.

thence to the episcopal bench. Cudworth and Henry More were still living there. South and Pococke, Jane and Aldrich, were at Oxford. Prideaux was in the close of Norwich, and Whitby in the close of Salisbury. But it was chiefly by the London clergy, who were always spoken of as a class apart, that the fame of their profession for learning and eloquence was upheld. The principal pulpits of the metropolis were occupied about this time by a crowd of distinguished men, from among whom was selected a large proportion of the rulers of the Church. Sherlock preached at the Temple, Tillotson at Lincoln's Inn, Wake and Jeremy Collier at Gray's Inn, Burnet at the Rolls, Stillingfleet at St. Paul's Cathedral, Patrick at St. Paul's, Covent Garden, Fowler at St. Giles's, Cripplegate, Sharp at St. Giles's in the Fields, Tenison at St. Martin's, Sprat at St. Margaret's, Beveridge at St. Peter's in Cornhill. Of these twelve men, all of high note in ecclesiastical history, ten became Bishops, and four Archbishops. Meanwhile almost the only important theological works which came forth from a rural parsonage were those of George Bull, afterwards Bishop of St. David's; and Bull never would have produced those works, had he not inherited an estate, by the sale of which he was enabled to collect a library, such as probably no other country clergyman in England possessed.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Anglican priesthood was divided into

<sup>1</sup> Nelson's *Life of Bull*. As to the extreme difficulty which the country clergy found in procuring books, see the *Life of Thomas Bray*, the founder of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

two sections, which, in acquirements, in manners, and in social position, differed widely from each other. One section, trained for cities and courts, comprised men familiar with all ancient and modern learning; men able to encounter Hobbes or Bossuet at all the weapons of controversy; men who could, in their sermons, set forth the majesty and beauty of Christianity with such justness of thought, and such energy of language, that the indolent Charles roused himself to listen, and the fastidious Buckingham forgot to sneer; men whose address, politeness, and knowledge of the world qualified them to manage the consciences of the wealthy and noble; men with whom Halifax loved to discuss the interests of empires, and from whom Dryden was not ashamed to own that he had learned to write.<sup>1</sup> The other section was destined to ruder and humbler service. It was dispersed over the country, and consisted chiefly of persons not at all wealthier, and not much more refined, than small farmers or upper servants. Yet it was in these rustic priests, who derived but a scanty subsistence from their tithe sheaves and tithe pigs, and who had not the smallest chance of ever attaining high professional honours, that the professional spirit was strongest. Among those divines

<sup>1</sup> "I have frequently heard him (Dryden) own with pleasure, that if he had any talent for English prose it was owing to his having often read the writings of the great Archbishop Tillotson."—Congreve's *Dedication of Dryden's Plays*.

*Hobbes*. Famous English philosopher of the seventeenth century.

*Bossuet*. Famous French divine and writer of the seventeenth century.

who were the boast of the Universities and the delight of the capital, and who had attained, or might reasonably expect to attain, opulence and lordly rank, a party, respectable in numbers, and more respectable in character, leaned towards constitutional principles of government, lived on friendly terms with Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, would gladly have seen a full toleration granted to all Protestant sects, and would even have consented to make alterations in the Liturgy, for the purpose of conciliating honest and candid Nonconformists. But such latitudinarianism was held in horror by the country parson. He was, indeed, prouder of his ragged gown than his superiors of their lawn and of their scarlet hoods. The very consciousness that there was little in his worldly circumstances to distinguish him from the villagers to whom he preached led him to hold immoderately high the dignity of that sacerdotal office which was his single title to reverence. Having lived in seclusion, and having had little opportunity of correcting his opinions by reading or conversation, he held and taught the doctrines of indefeasible hereditary right, of passive obedience, and of non-resistance in all their crude absurdity. Having been long engaged in a petty war against the neighbouring dissenters, he too often hated them for the wrongs which he had done them, and found no fault with the Five Mile Act and the Conventicle Act, except that those odious laws had

*Five Mile Act and Conventicle Act.* Laws passed by Cavalier Parliament, 1661-5, to break the political power of the Puritans.

not a sharper edge. Whatever influence his office gave him was exerted with passionate zeal on the Tory side; and that influence was immense. It would be a great error to imagine, because the country rector was in general not regarded as a gentleman, because he could not dare to aspire to the hand of one of the young ladies at the manor house, because he was not asked into the parlours of the great, but was left to drink and smoke with grooms and butlers, that the power of the clerical body was smaller than at present. The influence of a class is by no means proportioned to the consideration which the members of that class enjoy in their individual capacity. A Cardinal is a much more exalted personage than a begging friar: but it would be a grievous mistake to suppose that the College of Cardinals has exercised a greater dominion over the public mind of Europe than the Order of Saint Francis. In Ireland, at present, a peer holds a far higher station in society than a Roman Catholic priest: yet there are in Munster and Connaught few counties where a combination of priests would not carry an election against a combination of peers. In the seventeenth century the pulpit was to a large portion of the population what the periodical press now is. Scarce any of the clowns who came to the parish church ever saw a Gazette or a political pamphlet. Ill informed as their spiritual pastor might be, he was yet better informed than them-

*Order of Saint Francis.* Order of begging Friars who laboured in the Middle Ages for the welfare of the poor.



selves: he had every week an opportunity of haranguing them; and his harangues were never answered. At every important conjuncture, invectives against the Whigs and exhortations to obey the Lord's anointed resounded at once from many thousands of pulpits; and the effect was formidable indeed. Of all the causes which, after the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament, produced the violent reaction against the Exclusionists, the most potent seems to have been the oratory of the country clergy.

The power which the country gentlemen and the country clergymen exercised in the rural districts was in some measure counterbalanced by the power of the yeomanry, an eminently manly and true-hearted race. The petty proprietors who cultivated their own fields with their own hands, and enjoyed a modest competence, without affecting to have scutcheons and crests, or aspiring to sit on the bench of justice, then formed a much more important part of the nation than at present. If we may trust the best statistical writers of that age, not less than a hundred and sixty thousand proprietors, who with their families must have made up more than a seventh of the whole population, derived their subsistence from little freehold estates. The average income of these small landholders, an income made up of rent, profit, and wages, was estimated at between sixty and seventy pounds a year. It was computed that the number of persons who tilled

*Exclusionists.* Supporters of Bill of 1679-80 to exclude James, Duke of York, from the succession to the throne.

their own land was greater than the number of those who farmed the land of others.<sup>1</sup> A large portion of the yeomanry had, from the time of the Reformation, leaned towards Puritanism, had, in the civil war, taken the side of the Parliament, had, after the Restoration, persisted in hearing Presbyterian and Independent preachers, had, at elections, strenuously supported the Exclusionists, and had continued, even after the discovery of the Rye House plot and the proscription of the Whig leaders, to regard Popery and arbitrary power with unmitigated hostility.

## V. CITIES AND TOWNS

Great as has been the change in the rural life of England since the Revolution, the change which has come to pass in the cities is still more amazing. At present a sixth part of the nation is crowded into provincial towns of more than thirty thousand inhabitants. In the reign of Charles the Second no provincial town in the kingdom contained thirty thousand inhabitants; and only four provincial towns contained so many as ten thousand inhabitants.

Next to the capital, but next at an immense distance, stood Bristol, then the first English seaport, and Norwich, then the first English manufacturing town. Both have since that time been far outstripped by younger rivals; yet both have made great positive

<sup>1</sup> I have taken Davenant's estimate, which is a little lower than King's.

*Rye House plot.* Plot to murder Charles II., 1683.

advances. The population of Bristol has quadrupled. The population of Norwich has more than doubled.

Pepys, who visited Bristol eight years after the Restoration, was struck by the splendour of the city. But his standard was not high; for he noted down as a wonder the circumstance that, in Bristol, a man might look round him and see nothing but houses. It seems that, in no other place with which he was acquainted, except London, did the buildings completely shut out the woods and fields. Large as Bristol might then appear, it occupied but a very small portion of the area on which it now stands. A few churches of eminent beauty rose out of a labyrinth of narrow lanes built upon vaults of no great solidity. If a coach or a cart entered those alleys, there was danger that it would be wedged between the houses, and danger also that it would break into the cellars. Goods were therefore conveyed about the town almost exclusively in trucks drawn by dogs; and the richest inhabitants exhibited their wealth, not by riding in gilded carriages, but by walking the streets with trains of servants in rich liveries, and by keeping tables loaded with good cheer. The pomp of the christenings and burials far exceeded what was seen at any other place in England. The hospitality of the city was widely renowned, and especially the collations with which the sugar refiners regaled their visitors. The repast was dressed in the furnace, and was accompanied by a rich brewage made of the best Spanish wine, and celebrated over the whole kingdom as Bristol milk. This luxury was supported by a

thriving trade with the North American plantations and with the West Indies. The passion for colonial traffic was so strong that there was scarce a small shopkeeper in Bristol who had not a venture on board of some ship bound for Virginia or the Antilles. Some of these ventures indeed were not of the most honourable kind. There was, in the Transatlantic possessions of the crown, a great demand for labour; and this demand was partly supplied by a system of crimping and kidnapping at the principal English seaports. Nowhere was this system found in such active and extensive operation as at Bristol. Even the first magistrates of that city were not ashamed to enrich themselves by so odious a commerce. The number of houses appears, from the returns of the hearth money, to have been, in the year 1685, just five thousand three hundred. We can hardly suppose the number of persons in a house to have been greater than in the City of London; and in the City of London we learn from the best authority that there were then fifty-five persons to ten houses. The population of Bristol must therefore have been about twenty-nine thousand souls.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Evelyn's *Diary*, 27th June, 1654; Pepys's *Diary*, 13th June, 1668; Roger North's *Lives of Lord Keeper Guildford, and of Sir Dudley North*; Petty's *Political Arithmetic*. I have taken Petty's facts, but, in drawing inferences from them, I have been guided by King and Davenant, who, though not abler men than he, had the advantage of coming after him. As to the kidnapping for which Bristol was infamous, see North's *Life of Guildford*, 121, 216, and the harangue of Jeffreys on the subject, in the *Impartial History of his Life and Death*, printed with the Bloody Assizes. His style was, as usual, coarse; but I cannot reckon the reprimand which he gave to the magistrates of Bristol among his crimes.

Norwich was the capital of a large and fruitful province. It was the residence of a Bishop and of a chapter. It was the chief seat of the chief manufacture of the realm. Some men distinguished by learning and science had recently dwelt there; and no place in the kingdom, except the capital and the Universities, had more attractions for the curious. The library, the museum, the aviary, and the botanical garden of Sir Thomas Browne, were thought by Fellows of the Royal Society well worthy of a long pilgrimage. Norwich had also a court in miniature. In the heart of the city stood an old palace of the Dukes of Norfolk, said to be the largest town house in the kingdom out of London. In this mansion, to which were annexed a tennis court, a bowling green, and a wilderness, stretching along the banks of the Wansum, the noble family of Howard frequently resided, and kept a state resembling that of petty sovereigns. Drink was served to guests in goblets of pure gold. The very tongs and shovels were of silver. Pictures by Italian masters adorned the walls. The cabinets were filled with a fine collection of gems purchased by that Earl of Arundel whose marbles are now among the ornaments of Oxford. Here, in the year 1671, Charles and his court were sumptuously entertained. Here, too, all comers were annually welcomed, from Christmas to Twelfth Night. Ale flowed in oceans for the populace. Three coaches, one of which had been built at a cost of five hundred pounds to contain fourteen persons, were sent every afternoon round the city to bring ladies to the fes-

tivities; and the dances were always followed by a luxurious banquet. When the Duke of Norfolk came to Norwich, he was greeted like a King returning to his capital. The bells of the Cathedral and of Saint Peter Mancroft were rung: the guns of the Castle were fired; and the Mayor and Aldermen waited on their illustrious fellow citizen with complimentary addresses. In the year 1693 the population of Norwich was found, by actual enumeration, to be between twenty-eight and twenty-nine thousand souls.<sup>1</sup>

Far below Norwich, but still high in dignity and importance, were some other ancient capitals of shires. In that age it was seldom that a country gentleman went up with his family to London. The county town was his metropolis. He sometimes made it his residence during part of the year. At all events, he was often attracted thither by business and pleasure, by assizes, quarter sessions, elections, musters of militia, festivals, and races. There were the halls where the judges, robed in scarlet and escorted by javelins and trumpets, opened the King's commission twice a year. There were the markets at which the corn, the cattle, the wool, and the hops of the surrounding country were exposed to sale. There were the great fairs to which merchants came down from London, and where the rural dealer laid in his annual stores of sugar, stationery, cutlery, and muslin. There were the shops at which the best families of the

<sup>1</sup> Fuller's *Worthies*; Evelyn's *Diary*, 17th October, 1671; *Journal of E. Browne*, son of Sir Thomas Browne, January, 1663/4; Blomefield's *History of Norfolk*; *History of the City and County of Norwich*, 2 vols., 1768.



neighbourhood bought grocery and millinery. Some of these places derived dignity from interesting historical recollections, from cathedrals decorated by all the art and magnificence of the Middle Ages, from palaces where a long succession of prelates had dwelt, from closes surrounded by the venerable abodes of deans and canons, and from castles which had in the old time repelled the Nevilles or De Veres, and which bore more recent traces of the vengeance of Rupert or of Cromwell.

Conspicuous amongst these interesting cities were York, the capital of the north, and Exeter, the capital of the west. Neither can have contained much more than ten thousand inhabitants. Worcester, the queen of the cider land, had about eight thousand; Nottingham probably as many. Gloucester, renowned for that resolute defence which had been fatal to Charles the First, had certainly between four and five thousand; Derby not quite four thousand. Shrewsbury was the chief place of an extensive and fertile district. The court of the marches of Wales was held there. In the language of the gentry many miles round the Wrekin, to go to Shrewsbury was to go to town. The provincial wits and beauties imitated, as well as they could, the fashions of Saint James's Park, in the walks along the side of the Severn. The inhabitants were about seven thousand.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The population of York appears, from the return of baptisms and burials, in Drake's *History*, to have been about 13,000 in 1730. Exeter had only 17,000 inhabitants in 1801. The population of Worcester was numbered just before the

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*Resolute defence.* Siege of Gloucester, 10th August to 5th September, 1643.

The population of every one of these places has, since the Revolution, much more than doubled. The population of some has multiplied sevenfold. The streets have been almost entirely rebuilt. Slate has succeeded to thatch, and brick to timber. The pavements and the lamps, the display of wealth in the principal shops, and the luxurious neatness of the dwellings occupied by the gentry would, in the seventeenth century, have seemed miraculous. Yet is the relative importance of the old capitals of counties by no means what it was. Younger towns, towns which are rarely or never mentioned in our early history and which sent no representatives to our early Parliaments, have, within the memory of persons still living, grown to a greatness which this generation contemplates with wonder and pride, not unaccompanied by awe and anxiety.

The most eminent of these towns were indeed known in the seventeenth century as respectable seats of industry. Nay, their rapid progress and siege in 1646. See Nash's *History of Worcestershire*. I have made allowance for the increase which must be supposed to have taken place in forty years. In 1740 the population of Nottingham was found, by enumeration, to be just 10,000. See Dering's *History*. The population of Gloucester may readily be inferred from the number of houses which King found in the returns of hearth money, and from the number of births and burials which is given in Atkyns's *History*. The population of Derby was 4,000 in 1712. See Wolley's MS. *History*, quoted in Lyson's *Magna Britannia*. The population of Shrewsbury was ascertained, in 1695, by actual enumeration. As to the gaities of Shrewsbury, see Farquhar's *Recruiting Officer*. Farquhar's description is borne out by a ballad in the Pepysian Library, of which the burden is "Shrewsbury for me."

their vast opulence were then sometimes described in language which seems ludicrous to a man who has seen their present grandeur. One of the most populous and prosperous among them was Manchester. It had been required by the Protector to send one representative to his Parliament, and was mentioned by writers of the time of Charles the Second as a busy and opulent place. Cotton had, during half a century, been brought thither from Cyprus and Smyrna; but the manufacture was in its infancy. Whitney had not yet taught how the raw material might be furnished in quantities almost fabulous. Arkwright had not yet taught how it might be worked up with a speed and precision which seem magical. The whole annual import did not, at the end of the seventeenth century, amount to two millions of pounds, a quantity which would now hardly supply the demand of forty-eight hours. That wonderful emporium, which in population and wealth far surpasses capitals so much renowned as Berlin, Madrid, and Lisbon, was then a mean and ill built market town, containing under six thousand people. It then had not a single press. It now supports a hundred printing establishments. It then had not a single coach. It now supports twenty coachmakers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Blome's *Britannia*, 1673; Aikin's *Country round Manchester*; *Manchester Directory*, 1845; Baines, *History of the Cotton Manufacture*. The best information which I have been able to find, touching the population of Manchester in the seventeenth century, is contained in a paper drawn up by the Reverend R. Parkinson, and published in the *Journal of the Statistical Society* for October, 1842.

Leeds was already the chief seat of the woollen manufactures of Yorkshire: but the elderly inhabitants could still remember the time when the first brick house, then and long after called the Red House, was built. They boasted loudly of their increasing wealth, and of the immense sales of cloth which took place in the open air on the bridge. Hundreds, nay thousands of pounds, had been paid down in the course of one busy market day. The rising importance of Leeds had attracted the notice of successive governments. Charles the First had granted municipal privileges to the town. Oliver had invited it to send one member to the House of Commons. But from the returns of the hearth money it seems certain that the whole population of the borough, an extensive district which contains many hamlets, did not, in the reign of Charles the Second, exceed seven thousand souls. In 1841 there were more than a hundred and fifty thousand.<sup>1</sup>

About a day's journey south of Leeds, on the verge of a wild moorland tract, lay an ancient manor, now rich with cultivation, then barren and unenclosed, which was known by the name of Hallamshire. Iron abounded there; and, from a very early period, the rude whittles fabricated there had been sold all over the kingdom. They had indeed been mentioned by Geoffrey Chaucer in one of his *Canterbury Tales*. But the manufacture appears to have made little progress

<sup>1</sup> Thoresby's *Ducatus Leodensis*; Whitaker's *Loidis and Elmete*; Wardell's *Municipal History of the Borough of Leeds*. One of his *Canterbury Tales*. The Reeve's Tale.

during the three centuries which followed his time. This languor may perhaps be explained by the fact that the trade was, during almost the whole of this long period, subject to such regulations as the lord and his court leet thought fit to impose. The more delicate kinds of cutlery were either made in the capital, or brought from the Continent. It was not indeed till the reign of George the First that the English surgeons ceased to import from France those exquisitely fine blades which are required for operations on the human frame. Most of the Hallamshire forges were collected in a market town which had sprung up near the castle of the proprietor, and which, in the reign of James the First, had been a singularly miserable place, containing about two thousand inhabitants, of whom a third were half starved and half naked beggars. It seems certain from the parochial registers that the population did not amount to four thousand at the end of the reign of Charles the Second. The effects of a species of toil singularly unfavourable to the health and vigour of the human frame were at once discerned by every traveller. A large proportion of the people had distorted limbs. This is that Sheffield which now, with its dependencies, contains a hundred and twenty thousand souls, and which sends forth its admirable knives, razors, and lancets to the farthest ends of the world.<sup>1</sup>

Birmingham had not been thought of sufficient

<sup>1</sup> Hunter's *History of Hallamshire*.

*Court leet*. Manorial Court of the Middle Ages.

importance to send a member to Oliver's Parliament. Yet the manufacturers of Birmingham were already a busy and thriving race. They boasted that their hardware was highly esteemed, not indeed as now, at Pekin and Lima, at Bokhara and Timbuctoo, but in London, and even as far off as Ireland. They had acquired a less honourable renown as coiners of bad money. In allusion to their spurious groats, the Tory party had fixed on demagogues, who hypocritically affected zeal against Popery, the nickname of Birminghams. Yet in 1685 the population, which is now little less than two hundred thousand, did not amount to four thousand. Birmingham buttons were just beginning to be known: of Birmingham guns nobody had yet heard; and the place whence, two generations later, the magnificent editions of Baskerville went forth to astonish all the librarians of Europe, did not contain a single regular shop where a Bible or an almanack could be bought. On market days a bookseller named Michael Johnson, the father of the great Samuel Johnson, came over from Lichfield, and opened a stall during a few hours. This supply of literature was long found adequate to the demand.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Blome's *Britannia*, 1673; Dugdale's *Warwickshire*; North's *Examen*, 321; Preface to *Absalom and Achitophel*; Hutton's *History of Birmingham*; Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. In 1690 the burials at Birmingham were 150, the baptisms 125. I think it probable that the annual mortality was little less than one in twenty-five. In London it was considerably greater. A historian of Nottingham, half a century later, boasted of the extraordinary salubrity of his town, where the annual mortality was one in thirty. See Dering's *History of Nottingham*.



These four chief seats of our great manufactures deserve especial mention. It would be tedious to enumerate all the populous and opulent hives of industry which, a hundred and fifty years ago, were hamlets without a parish church, or desolate moors, inhabited only by grouse and wild deer. Nor has the change been less signal in those outlets by which the products of English looms and forges are poured forth over the whole world. At present Liverpool contains about three hundred thousand inhabitants. The shipping registered at her port amounts to between four and five hundred thousand tons. Into her custom house has been repeatedly paid in one year a sum more than thrice as great as the whole income of the English crown in 1685. The receipts of her post office, even since the great reduction of the duty, exceed the sum which the postage of the whole kingdom yielded to the Duke of York. Her endless docks, quays and warehouses are among the wonders of the world. Yet even those docks and quays and warehouses seem hardly to suffice for the gigantic trade of the Mersey; and already a rival city is growing fast on the opposite shore. In the days of Charles the Second Liverpool was described as a rising town which had recently made great advances, and which maintained a profitable intercourse with Ireland and with the sugar colonies. The customs had multiplied eightfold within sixteen years, and amounted to what was then considered as the immense sum of fifteen thousand pounds annually. But the population can hardly have exceeded four

thousand: the shipping was about fourteen hundred tons, less than the tonnage of a single modern Indian of the first class; and the whole number of seamen belonging to the port cannot be estimated at more than two hundred.<sup>1</sup>

Such has been the progress of those towns where wealth is created and accumulated. Not less rapid has been the progress of towns of a very different kind, towns in which wealth, created and accumulated elsewhere, is expended for purposes of health and recreation. Some of the most remarkable of these towns have sprung into existence since the time of the Stuarts. Cheltenham is now a greater city than any which the kingdom contained in the seventeenth century, London alone excepted. But in the seventeenth century, and at the beginning of the eighteenth, Cheltenham was mentioned by local historians merely as a rural parish lying under the Cotswold Hills, and affording good ground, both for tillage and pasture. Corn grew and cattle browsed over the space now covered by that gay succession of streets and villas.<sup>2</sup> Brighton was described as a place which had once been thriving, which had possessed many small fishing barks, and which had, when at the height of prosperity, contained above

<sup>1</sup> Blome's *Britannia*; Gregson's *Antiquities of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster*, Part II.; Petition from Liverpool in the Privy Council Book, 10th May, 1686. In 1690 the burials at Liverpool were 151, the baptisms 120. In 1844 the net receipt of the customs at Liverpool was £4,365,526 1s. 8d.

<sup>2</sup> Atkyns's *Gloucestershire*.

two thousand inhabitants, but which was sinking fast into decay. The sea was gradually gaining on the buildings, which at length almost entirely disappeared. Ninety years ago the ruins of an old fort were to be seen lying among the pebbles and seaweed on the beach; and ancient men could still point out the traces of foundations on a spot where a street of more than a hundred huts had been swallowed up by the waves. So desolate was the place after this calamity, that the vicarage was thought scarcely worth having. A few poor fishermen, however, still continued to dry their nets on those cliffs, on which now a town, more than twice as large and populous as the Bristol of the Stuarts, presents, mile after mile, its gay and fantastic front to the sea.<sup>1</sup>

England, however, was not, in the seventeenth century, destitute of watering places. The gentry of Derbyshire and of the neighbouring counties repaired to Buxton, where they were crowded into low wooden sheds, and regaled with oatcake, and with a viand which the hosts called mutton, but which the guests strongly suspected to be dog.<sup>2</sup> Tunbridge Wells, lying within a day's journey of the capital, and in one of the richest and most highly civilised parts of the kingdom, had much greater attractions. At present we see there a town which

<sup>1</sup> *Magna Britannia*; Grose's *Antiquities*; *New Brighthelmstone Directory*, 1770.

<sup>2</sup> *Tour in Derbyshire*, by Thomas Browne, son of Sir Thomas.

would, a hundred and sixty years ago, have ranked, in population, fourth or fifth among the towns of England. The brilliancy of the shops and the luxury of the private dwellings far surpasses anything that England could then show. When the court, soon after the Restoration, visited Tunbridge Wells, there was no town: but, within a mile of the spring, rustic cottages, somewhat cleaner and neater than the ordinary cottages of that time, were scattered over the heath. Some of these cabins were moveable, and were carried on sledges from one part of the common to another. To these huts men of fashion, wearied with the din and smoke of London, sometimes came in the summer to breathe fresh air, and to catch a glimpse of rural life. During the season a kind of fair was daily held near the fountain. The wives and daughters of the Kentish farmers came from the neighbouring villages with cream, cherries, wheatears, and quails. To chaffer with them, to flirt with them, to praise their straw hats and tight heels, was a refreshing pastime to voluptuaries sick of the airs of actresses and maids of honour. Milliners, toymen, and jewellers came down from London, and opened a bazaar under the trees. In one booth the politician might find his coffee and the *London Gazette*; in another were gamblers playing deep at basset; and, on fine evenings, the fiddles were in attendance, and there were morris dances on the elastic turf of the bowling green. In 1685 a subscription had just been raised among those who frequented the wells for building a church, which the Tories,

who then domineered everywhere, insisted on dedicating to Saint Charles the Martyr.<sup>1</sup>

But at the head of the English watering places, without a rival, was Bath. The springs of that city had been renowned from the days of the Romans. It had been, during many centuries, the seat of a Bishop. The sick repaired thither from every part of the realm. The King sometimes held his court there. Nevertheless, Bath was then a maze of only four or five hundred houses, crowded within an old wall in the vicinity of the Avon. Pictures of what were considered as the finest of those houses are still extant, and greatly resemble the lowest rag shops and pothouses of Ratcliffe Highway. Even then, indeed, travellers complained of the narrowness and meanness of the streets. That beautiful city which charms even eyes familiar with the masterpieces of Bramante and Palladio, and which the genius of Anstey and of Smollett, of Frances Burney and of Jane Austen, has made classic ground, had not begun to exist. Milsom Street itself was an open field lying far beyond the walls; and hedgerows intersected the space which is now covered by the Crescent and the Circus. The poor patients to whom the waters had been recommended lay on straw in a place which, to use the language of a contemporary physician, was

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Grammont*; Hasted's *History of Kent*; *Tunbridge Wells*, a Comedy, 1678; Causton's *Tunbridgialia*, 1688; *Metellus*, a poem on Tunbridge Wells, 1693.

*Bramante and Palladio*. Italian architects of the sixteenth century.

*Anstey, Smollett, Frances Burney, Jane Austen*. Eighteenth-century novelists.

a covert rather than a lodging. As to the comforts and luxuries which were to be found in the interior of the houses of Bath by the fashionable visitors who resorted thither in search of health or amusement, we possess information more complete and minute than can generally be obtained on such subjects. A writer who published an account of that city about sixty years after the Revolution has accurately described the changes which had taken place within his own recollection. He assures us that in his younger days the gentlemen who visited the springs slept in rooms hardly as good as the garrets which he lived to see occupied by footmen. The floors of the dining rooms were uncarpeted, and were coloured brown with a wash made of soot and small beer, in order to hide the dirt. Not a wainscot was painted. Not a hearth or a chimneypiece was of marble. A slab of common freestone and fire irons which had cost from three to four shillings were thought sufficient for any fireplace. The best apartments were hung with coarse woollen stuff, and were furnished with rush-bottomed chairs. Readers who take an interest in the progress of civilisation and of the useful arts will be grateful to the humble topographer who has recorded these facts, and will perhaps wish that historians of far higher pretensions had sometimes spared a few pages from military evolutions and political intrigues, for the purpose of letting us know how the parlours and bedchambers of our ancestors looked.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Wood's *History of Bath*, 1749; Evelyn's *Diary*, 27th June, 1654; Pepys's *Diary*, 12th June, 1668; Stukeley's



## V. LONDON

The position of London, relatively to the other towns of the empire, was, in the time of Charles the Second, far higher than at present. For at present the population of London is little more than six times the population of Manchester or of Liverpool. In the days of Charles the Second the population of London was more than seventeen times the population of Bristol or of Norwich. It may be doubted whether any other instance can be mentioned of a great kingdom in which the first city was more than seventeen times as large as the second. There is reason to believe that, in 1685, London had been, during about half a century, the most populous capital in Europe. The inhabitants, who are now at least nineteen hundred thousand, were then probably little more than half a million.<sup>1</sup> London had in the world only one commercial rival, now long outstripped, the mighty and opulent Amsterdam. English writers boasted of the forest of masts and yardarms which covered the river from the Bridge to the Tower, and of the stupendous sums which were collected at the Custom House in Thames Street. There is, indeed, no doubt that the trade of the metropolis then bore

*Itinerarium Curiosum*; Collinson's *Somersetshire*; Dr. Peirce's *History and Memoirs of the Bath*, 1713, Book I. chap. viii. obs. 2, 1684. I have consulted several old maps and pictures of Bath, particularly one curious map which is surrounded by views of the principal buildings. It bears the date of 1717.

<sup>1</sup> According to King, 530,000.

a far greater proportion than at present to the whole trade of the country; yet to our generation the honest vaunting of our ancestors must appear almost ludicrous. The shipping which they thought incredibly great appears not to have exceeded seventy thousand tons. This was, indeed, then more than a third of the whole tonnage of the kingdom, but is now less than a fourth of the tonnage of Newcastle, and is nearly equalled by the tonnage of the steam vessels of the Thames. The customs of London amounted, in 1685, to about three hundred and thirty thousand pounds a year. In our time the net duty paid annually, at the same place, exceeds ten millions.<sup>1</sup>

Whoever examines the maps of London which were published towards the close of the reign of Charles the Second will see that only the nucleus of the present capital then existed. The town did not, as now, fade by imperceptible degrees into the country. No long avenues of villas, embowered in lilacs and laburnums, extended from the great centre of wealth and civilisation almost to the boundaries of Middlesex and far into the heart of Kent and Surrey. In the east, no part of the immense line of warehouses and artificial lakes which now spreads from the Tower to Blackwall had even been projected. On the west, scarcely one of those stately piles of building which are inhabited by the noble and

<sup>1</sup> Macpherson's *History of Commerce*; Chalmers's *Estimate*; Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684. The tonnage of the steamers belonging to the port of London was, at the end of 1847, about 60,000 tons. The customs of the port, from 1842 to 1845, very nearly averaged £11,000,000.

wealthy was in existence; and Chelsea, which is now peopled by more than forty thousand human beings, was a quiet country village with about a thousand inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> On the north, cattle fed, and sportsmen wandered with dogs and guns, over the site of the borough of Marylebone, and over far the greater part of the space now covered by the boroughs of Finsbury and of the Tower Hamlets. Islington was almost a solitude; and poets loved to contrast its silence and repose with the din and turmoil of the monster London.<sup>2</sup> On the south the capital is now connected with its suburb by several bridges, not inferior in magnificence and solidity to the noblest works of the Cæsars. In 1685, a single line of irregular arches, overhung by piles of mean and crazy houses, and garnished, after a fashion worthy of the naked barbarians of Dahomey, with scores of mouldering heads, impeded the navigation of the river.

Of the metropolis, the City, properly so called, was the most important division. At the time of the Restoration it had been built, for the most part, of wood and plaster; the few bricks that were used were ill baked; the booths where goods were exposed to sale projected far into the streets, and were overhung by the upper stories. A few specimens of this architecture may still be seen in those districts which were not reached by the great fire. That fire had, in a few days, covered a space of little less than a square mile with the ruins of eighty-nine churches and of

<sup>1</sup> Lysons' *Environs of London*. The baptisms at Chelsea, between 1680 and 1690, were only forty-two a year.

<sup>2</sup> Cowley, *Discourse of Solitude*.

thirteen thousand houses. But the City had risen again with a celerity which had excited the admiration of neighbouring countries. Unfortunately, the old lines of the streets had been to a great extent preserved; and those lines, originally traced in an age when even princesses performed their journeys on horseback, were often too narrow to allow wheeled carriages to pass each other with ease, and were therefore ill adapted for the residence of wealthy persons in an age when a coach and six was a fashionable luxury. The style of building was, however, far superior to that of the City which had perished. The ordinary material was brick, of much better quality than had formerly been used. On the sites of the ancient parish churches had arisen a multitude of new domes, towers, and spires which bore the mark of the fertile genius of Wren. In every place save one the traces of the great devastation had been completely effaced. But the crowds of workmen, the scaffolds and the masses of hewn stone were still to be seen where the noblest of Protestant temples was slowly rising on the ruins of the old Cathedral of St. Paul.<sup>1</sup>

The whole character of the City has, since that time, undergone a complete change. At present the

<sup>1</sup> The fullest and most trustworthy information about the state of the buildings of London at this time is to be derived from the maps and drawings in the British Museum and in the Pepysian Library. The badness of the bricks in the old buildings of London is particularly mentioned in the *Travels of the Grand Duke Cosmo*. There is an account of the works at St. Paul's in Ward's *London Spy*. I am almost ashamed to quote such nauseous balderdash; but I have been forced to descend even lower, if possible, in search of materials.

bankers, the merchants, and the chief shopkeepers repair thither on six mornings of every week for the transaction of business: but they reside in other quarters of the metropolis, or at suburban country seats surrounded by shrubberies and flower gardens. This revolution in private habits has produced a political revolution of no small importance. The City is no longer regarded by the wealthiest traders with that attachment which every man naturally feels for his home. It is no longer associated in their minds with domestic affections and endearments. The fireside, the nursery, the social table, the quiet bed are not there. Lombard Street and Threadneedle Street are merely places where men toil and accumulate. They go elsewhere to enjoy and to expend. On a Sunday, or in an evening after the hours of business, some courts and alleys, which a few hours before had been alive with hurrying feet and anxious faces, are as silent as the glades of a forest. The chiefs of the mercantile interest are no longer citizens. They avoid, they almost contemn, municipal honours and duties. Those honours and duties are abandoned to men who, though useful and highly respectable, seldom belong to the princely commercial houses of which the names are renowned throughout the world.

In the seventeenth century the City was the merchant's residence. Those mansions of the great old burghers which still exist have been turned into counting houses and warehouses: but it is evident that they were originally not inferior in magnifi-

cence to the dwellings which were then inhabited by the nobility. They sometimes stand in retired and gloomy courts, and are accessible only by inconvenient passages: but their dimensions are ample, and their aspect stately. The entrances are decorated with richly carved pillars and canopies. The staircases and landing places are not wanting in grandeur. The floors are sometimes of wood, tessellated after the fashion of France. The palace of Sir Robert Clayton, in the Old Jewry, contained a superb banquetting room wainscoted with cedar, and adorned with battles of gods and giants in fresco.<sup>1</sup> Sir Dudley North expended four thousand pounds, a sum which would then have been important to a Duke, on the rich furniture of his reception rooms in Basinghall Street.<sup>2</sup> In such abodes, under the last Stuarts, the heads of the great firms lived splendidly and hospitably. To their dwelling place they were bound by the strongest ties of interest and affection. There they had passed their youth, had made their friendships, had courted their wives, had seen their children grow up, had laid the remains of their parents in the earth, and expected that their own remains would be laid. That intense patriotism which is peculiar to the members of societies congregated within a narrow space was, in such circumstances, strongly developed. London was to the Londoner, what Athens was to the Athenian of the age of Pericles, what Florence was to the Florentine of the fifteenth century. The

<sup>1</sup> Evelyn's *Diary*, 20th September, 1672.

<sup>2</sup> Roger North's *Life of Sir Dudley North*.



citizen was proud of the grandeur of his city, punctilious about her claims to respect, ambitious of her offices, and zealous for her franchises.

At the close of the reign of Charles the Second the pride of the Londoners was smarting from a cruel mortification. The old charter had been taken away; and the magistracy had been remodelled. All the civic functionaries were Tories; and the Whigs, though in numbers and in wealth superior to their opponents, found themselves excluded from every local dignity. Nevertheless, the external splendour of the municipal government was not diminished, nay, was rather increased by this change. For, under the administration of some Puritans who had lately borne rule, the ancient fame of the city for good cheer had declined: but under the new magistrates, who belonged to a more festive party, and at whose boards guests of rank and fashion from beyond Temple Bar were often seen, the Guildhall and the halls of the great companies were enlivened by many sumptuous banquets. During these repasts, odes, composed by the poet laureate of the corporation, in praise of the King, the Duke, and the Mayor, were sung to music. The drinking was deep, the shouting loud. An observant Tory, who had often shared in these revels, has remarked that the practice of huzzaing after drinking healths dates from this joyous period.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> North's *Examen*. This most amusing writer has preserved a specimen of the sublime raptures in which the Pindar of the City indulged:

The worshipful Sir John Moor!  
After age that name adore!

The magnificence displayed by the first civic magistrate was almost regal. The gilded coach, indeed, which is now annually admired by the crowd, was not yet a part of his state. On great occasions he appeared on horseback, attended by a long cavalcade inferior in magnificence only to that which, before a coronation, escorted the sovereign from the Tower to Westminster. The Lord Mayor was never seen in public without his rich robe, his hood of black velvet, his gold chain, his jewel, and a great attendance of harbingers and guards.<sup>1</sup> Nor did the world find anything ludicrous in the pomp which constantly surrounded him. For it was not more than proportioned to the place which, as wielding the strength and representing the dignity of the City of London, he was entitled to occupy in the state. That City, being then not only without equal in the country, but without second, had, during five and forty years, exercised almost as great an influence on the politics of England as Paris has, in our own time, exercised on the politics of France. In intelligence London was greatly in advance of every other part of the kingdom. A government, supported and trusted by London, could in a day obtain such pecuniary means as it would have taken months to collect from the rest of the island. Nor were the military resources of the capital to be despised. The power which the Lord Lieutenants exercised in other parts of the kingdom was in London intrusted to a Commission

<sup>1</sup>Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684; *Angliæ Metropolis*, 1690; Seymour's *London*, 1734.

of eminent citizens. Under the orders of this Commission were twelve regiments of foot and two regiments of horse. An army of drapers' apprentices and journeymen tailors, with common councilmen for captains and aldermen for colonels, might not indeed have been able to stand its ground against regular troops; but there were then very few regular troops in the kingdom. A town, therefore, which could send forth, at an hour's notice, twenty thousand men, abounding in natural courage, provided with tolerable weapons, and not altogether untinctured with martial discipline, could not but be a valuable ally and a formidable enemy. It was not forgotten that Hampden and Pym had been protected from lawless tyranny by the London trainbands; that, in the great crisis of the civil war, the London trainbands had marched to raise the siege of Gloucester; or that, in the movement against the military tyrants which followed the downfall of Richard Cromwell, the London trainbands had borne a signal part. In truth, it is no exaggeration to say that, but for the hostility of the City, Charles the First would never have been vanquished, and that, without the help of the City, Charles the Second could scarcely have been restored.

These considerations may serve to explain why, in spite of that attraction which had, during a long course of years, gradually drawn the aristocracy

*It was not . . . trainbands.* In 1642, Charles I. attempted to arrest five Members of Parliament who took refuge in the City of London.

westward, a few men of high rank had continued, till a very recent period, to dwell in the vicinity of the Exchange and of the Guildhall. Shaftesbury and Buckingham, while engaged in bitter and unscrupulous opposition to the government, had thought that they could nowhere carry on their intrigues so conveniently or so securely as under the protection of the City magistrates and the City militia. Shaftesbury had therefore lived in Aldersgate Street, at a house which may still easily be known by pilasters and wreaths, the graceful work of Inigo. Buckingham had ordered his mansion near Charing Cross, once the abode of the Archbishops of York, to be pulled down; and, while streets and alleys which are still named after him were rising on that site, chose to reside in Dowgate.<sup>1</sup>

These, however, were rare exceptions. Almost all the noble families of England had long migrated beyond the walls. The district where most of their town houses stood lies between the City and the regions which are now considered as fashionable. A few great men still retained their hereditary hotels between the Strand and the river. The stately dwellings on the south and west of Lincoln's Inn Fields, the Piazza of Covent Garden, Southampton Square, which is now called Bloomsbury Square, and King's Square in Soho Fields, which is now called Soho Square, were among the favourite spots. Foreign princes were carried to see Bloomsbury

<sup>1</sup> North's *Examen*, 116. Wood, *Ath. Ox.*, *Shaftesbury*. *The Duke of B.'s Litany*.

Square, as one of the wonders of England.<sup>1</sup> Soho Square, which had just been built, was to our ancestors a subject of pride with which their posterity will hardly sympathise. Monmouth Square had been the name while the fortunes of the Duke of Monmouth flourished; and on the southern side towered his mansion. The front, though ungraceful, was lofty and richly adorned. The walls of the principal apartments were finely sculptured with fruit, foliage, and armorial bearings, and were hung with embroidered satin.<sup>2</sup> Every trace of this magnificence has long disappeared; and no aristocratical mansion is to be found in that once aristocratical quarter. A little way north from Holborn, and on the verge of the pastures and cornfields, rose two celebrated palaces, each with an ample garden. One of them, then called Southampton House, and subsequently Bedford House, was removed about fifty years ago to make room for a new city, which now covers, with its squares, streets, and churches, a vast area, renowned in the seventeenth century for peaches and snipes. The other, Montague House, celebrated for its frescoes and furniture, was, a few months after the death of Charles the Second, burned to the ground, and was speedily succeeded by a more magnificent Montague House, which, having been long the repository of such various and precious treasures of art, science, and learning as were scarce ever before assembled

<sup>1</sup> *Travels of the Grand Duke Cosmo.*

<sup>2</sup> Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684; Pennant's *London*; Smith's *Life of Nollekens*.

under a single roof, has just given place to an edifice more magnificent still.<sup>1</sup>

Nearer to the court, on a space called Saint James's Fields, had just been built Saint James's Square and Jermyn Street. Saint James's Church had recently been opened for the accommodation of the inhabitants of this new quarter.<sup>2</sup> Golden Square, which was in the next generation inhabited by lords and ministers of state, had not yet been begun. Indeed the only dwellings to be seen on the north of Piccadilly were three or four isolated and almost rural mansions, of which the most celebrated was the costly pile erected by Clarendon, and nick-named Dunkirk House. It had been purchased after its founder's downfall by the Duke of Albemarle. The Clarendon Hotel and Albemarle Street still preserve the memory of the site.

He who then rambled to what is now the gayest and most crowded part of Regent Street found himself in a solitude, and was sometimes so fortunate as to have a shot at a woodcock.<sup>3</sup> On the north the Oxford road ran between hedges. Three or four hundred yards to the south were the garden walls of a few great houses which were considered as quite out of town. On the west was a meadow renowned for a spring from which, long afterwards, Conduit

<sup>1</sup> Evelyn's *Diary*, 10th October, 1683, 19th January, 1685/6.

<sup>2</sup> Stat. 1 Jac. II. c. 22. Evelyn's *Diary*, 7th December 1684.

<sup>3</sup> Old General Oglethorpe, who died in 1785, used to boast that he had shot birds here in Anne's reign. See Pennant's *London*, and the *Gentleman's Magazine* for July, 1785.

*An edifice more magnificent still.* The British Museum.



Street was named. On the east was a field not to be passed without a shudder by any Londoner of that age. There, as in a place far from the haunts of men, had been dug, twenty years before, when the great plague was raging, a pit into which the dead carts had nightly shot corpses by scores. It was popularly believed that the earth was deeply tainted with infection, and could not be disturbed without imminent risk to human life. No foundations were laid there till two generations had passed without any return of the pestilence, and till the ghastly spot had long been surrounded by buildings.<sup>1</sup>

We should greatly err if we were to suppose that any of the streets and squares then bore the same aspect as at present. The great majority of the houses, indeed, have, since that time, been wholly, or in great part, rebuilt. If the most fashionable parts of the capital could be placed before us, such as they then were, we should be disgusted by their squalid appearance, and poisoned by their noisome atmosphere. In Covent Garden a filthy and noisy market was held close to the dwellings of the great. Fruit women screamed, carters fought, cabbage stalks and rotten apples accumulated in heaps at the thresholds of the Countess of Berkshire and of the Bishop of Durham.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The pest field will be seen in maps of London as late as the end of George the First's reign.

<sup>2</sup> See a very curious plan of Covent Garden made about 1690, and engraved for Smith's *History of Westminster*. See also Hogarth's *Morning*, painted while some of the houses in the Piazza were still occupied by people of fashion.

The centre of Lincoln's Inn Fields was an open space where the rabble congregated every evening, within a few yards of Cardigan House and Winchester House, to hear mountebanks harangue, to see bears dance, and to set dogs at oxen. Rubbish was shot in every part of the area. Horses were exercised there. The beggars were as noisy and importunate as in the worst governed cities of the Continent. A Lincoln's Inn mumper was a proverb. The whole fraternity knew the arms and liveries of every charitably disposed grandee in the neighbourhood, and, as soon as his lordship's coach and six appeared, came hopping and crawling in crowds to persecute him. These disorders lasted, in spite of many accidents, and of some legal proceedings, till, in the reign of George the Second, Sir Joseph Jekyll, Master of the Rolls, was knocked down and nearly killed in the middle of the square. Then at length palisades were set up, and a pleasant garden laid out.<sup>1</sup>

Saint James's Square was a receptacle for all the offal and cinders, for all the dead cats and dead dogs

<sup>1</sup> *London Spy*; Tom Brown's *Comical View of London and Westminster*; Turner's *Propositions for the employing of the Poor*, 1678; *Daily Courant* and *Daily Journal* of 7th June, 1733; Case of Michael v. Allestree, in 1676, 2 Levinz, p. 172. Michael had been run over by two horses which Allestree was breaking in in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The declaration set forth that the defendant "porta deux chivals ungovernable en un coach, et improvide, incaute, et absque debita consideratione ineptitudinis loci la eux drive pur eux faire tractable et apt pur un coach, quels chivals, pur ceo que, per leur ferocite, ne poient estre rule, curre sur le plaintiff et le noie."

*Mumper*. Slang term for a beggar.

of Westminster. At one time a cudgel player kept the ring there. At another time an impudent squatter settled himself there, and built a shed for rubbish under the windows of the gilded saloons in which the first magnates of the realm, Norfolks, Ormonds, Kents, and Pembrokes, gave banquets and balls. It was not till these nuisances had lasted through a whole generation, and till much had been written about them, that the inhabitants applied to Parliament for permission to put up rails, and to plant trees.<sup>1</sup>

When such was the state of the region inhabited by the most luxurious portion of society, we may easily believe that the great body of the population suffered what would now be considered as insupportable grievances. The pavement was detestable; all foreigners cried shame upon it. The drainage was so bad that in rainy weather the gutters soon became torrents. Several facetious poets have commemorated the fury with which these black rivulets roared down Snow Hill and Ludgate Hill, bearing to Fleet Ditch a vast tribute of animal and vegetable filth from the stalls of butchers and greengrocers. This flood was profusely thrown to right and left by coaches and carts. To keep as far from the carriage road as possible was therefore the wish of every pedestrian. The mild and timid gave the wall. The bold and athletic took it. If two roisterers met, they

<sup>1</sup> Stat. 12 Geo. I. c. 25; *Commons' Journals*, 25th February, 2nd March, 1725/6; *London Gardener*, 1712; *Evening Post*, 23rd March, 1731. I have not been able to find this number of the *Evening Post*; I therefore quote it on the faith of Mr. Malcolm, who mentions it in his *History of London*.

cocked their hats in each other's faces, and pushed each other about till the weaker was shoved towards the kennel. If he was a mere bully he sneaked off, muttering that he should find a time. If he was pugnacious, the encounter probably ended in a duel behind Montague House.<sup>1</sup>

The houses were not numbered. There would indeed have been little advantage in numbering them; for of the coachmen, chairmen, porters, and errand boys of London, a very small proportion could read. It was necessary to use marks which the most ignorant could understand. The shops were therefore distinguished by painted signs, which gave a gay and grotesque aspect to the streets. The walk from Charing Cross to Whitechapel lay through an endless succession of Saracens' Heads, Royal Oaks, Blue Bears, and Golden Lambs, which disappeared when they were no longer required for the direction of the common people.

When the evening closed in, the difficulty and danger of walking about London became serious indeed. The garret windows were opened, and pails were emptied, with little regard to those who were passing below. Falls, bruises, and broken bones were of constant occurrence. For, till the last year of the reign of Charles the Second, most of the streets were left in profound darkness. Thieves and robbers plied their trade with impunity: yet they were hardly

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres sur les Anglois*, written early in the reign of William the Third; Swift's *City Shower*; Gay's *Trivia*. Johnson used to relate a curious conversation which he had with his mother about giving and taking the wall.

so terrible to peaceable citizens as another class of ruffians. It was a favourite amusement of dissolute young gentlemen to swagger by night about the town, breaking windows, upsetting sedans, beating quiet men, and offering rude caresses to pretty women. Several dynasties of these tyrants had, since the Restoration, domineered over the streets. The Muns and Tityre Tus had given place to the Hectors, and the Hectors had been recently succeeded by the Scourers. At a later period arose the Nicker, the Hawcubite, and the yet more dreaded name of Mohawk.<sup>1</sup> The machinery for keeping the peace was utterly contemptible. There was an Act of Common Council which provided that more than a thousand watchmen should be constantly on the alert in the city, from sunset to sunrise, and that every inhabitant should take his turn of duty. But this Act was negligently executed. Few of those who were summoned left their homes; and those

<sup>1</sup> Oldham's *Imitation of the 3rd Satire of Juvenal*, 1682; Shadwell's *Scourers*, 1690. Many other authorities will readily occur to all who are acquainted with the popular literature of that and the succeeding generation. It may be suspected that some of the Tityre Tus, like good Cavaliers, broke Milton's windows shortly after the Restoration. I am confident that he was thinking of those pests of London when he dedicated the noble lines—

And in luxurious cities, when the noise  
Of riot ascends above the loftiest towers,  
And injury and outrage, and when night  
Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons  
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.

*Few of those . . . streets.* See *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act III. Scene iii.

few generally found it more agreeable to tipple in alehouses than to pace the streets.<sup>1</sup>

It ought to be noticed that, in the last year of the reign of Charles the Second, began a great change in the police of London, a change which has perhaps added as much to the happiness of the body of the people as revolutions of much greater fame. An ingenious projector, named Edward Heming, obtained letters patent conveying to him, for a term of years, the exclusive right of lighting up London. He undertook, for a moderate consideration, to place a light before every tenth door, on moonless nights, from Michaelmas to Lady Day, and from six to twelve of the clock. Those who now see the capital all the year round, from dusk to dawn, blazing with a splendour compared with which the illuminations for La Hogue and Blenheim would have looked pale, may perhaps smile to think of Heming's lanterns, which glimmered feebly before one house in ten during a small part of one night in three. But such was not the feeling of his contemporaries. His scheme was enthusiastically applauded, and furiously attacked. The friends of improvement extolled him as the greatest of all the benefactors of his city. What, they asked, were the boasted inventions of Archimedes, when compared with the achievement of the man who had turned the nocturnal shades into noon day? In spite of these eloquent eulogies the cause of darkness was not left undefended. There

<sup>1</sup> Seymour's *London*.

*Police*. Organisation or system of government.



were fools in that age who opposed the introduction of what was called the new light as strenuously as fools in our age have opposed the introduction of vaccination and railroads, as strenuously as the fools of an age anterior to the dawn of history doubtless opposed the introduction of the plough and of alphabetical writing. Many years after the date of Heming's patent there were extensive districts in which no lamp was seen.<sup>1</sup>

We may easily imagine what, in such times, must have been the state of the quarters of London which were peopled by the outcasts of society. Among those quarters one had attained a scandalous pre-eminence. On the confines of the City and the Temple had been founded, in the thirteenth century, a House of Carmelite Friars, distinguished by their white hoods. The precinct of this house had, before the Reformation, been a sanctuary for criminals, and still retained the privilege of protecting debtors from arrest. Insolvents consequently were to be found in every dwelling, from cellar to garret. Of these a large proportion were knaves and libertines, and were followed to their asylum by women more abandoned than themselves. The civil power was unable to keep order in a district swarming with such inhabitants; and thus Whitefriars became the favourite resort of all who wished to be emancipated from the restraints of the law. Though the immunities legally belonging to the place extended only to cases of

<sup>1</sup> *Angliæ Metropolis*, 1690, Sect. 17, entitled, "Of the new lights." Seymour's *London*.

debt, cheats, false witnesses, forgers, and highway-men found refuge there. For amidst a rabble so desperate no peace officer's life was in safety. At the cry of "Rescue" bullies with swords and cudgels, and termagant hags with spits and broomsticks, poured forth by hundreds; and the intruder was fortunate if he escaped back into Fleet Street, hustled, stripped, and pumped upon. Even the warrant of the Chief Justice of England could not be executed without the help of a company of musketeers. Such relics of the barbarism of the darkest ages were to be found within a short walk of the chambers where Somers was studying history and law, of the chapel where Tillotson was preaching, of the coffee house where Dryden was passing judgment on poems and plays, and of the hall where the Royal Society was examining the astronomical system of Isaac Newton.<sup>1</sup>

Each of the two cities which made up the capital of England had its own centre of attraction. In the metropolis of commerce the point of convergence was the Exchange; in the metropolis of fashion the Palace. But the Palace did not retain its influence so long as the Exchange. The Revolution completely altered the relations between the court and the higher classes of society. It was by degrees discovered that the King, in his individual capacity, had very little to give; that coronets and garters, bishoprics and embassies, lordships of the Treasury and tellerships of the Exchequer, nay, even charges

<sup>1</sup> Stowe's *Survey of London*; Shadwell's *Squire of Alsatia*; Ward's *London Spy*; Stat. 8 and 9 Gul. III. c. 27.

in the royal stud and bedchamber, were really bestowed, not by him, but by his advisers. Every ambitious and covetous man perceived that he would consult his own interest far better by acquiring the dominion of a Cornish borough, and by rendering good service to the ministry during a critical session, than by becoming the companion, or even the minion, of his prince. It was therefore in the antechambers, not of George the First and of George the Second, but of Walpole and of Pelham, that the daily crowd of courtiers was to be found. It is also to be remarked that the same revolution which made it impossible that our Kings should use the patronage of the state, merely for the purpose of gratifying their personal predilections, gave us several Kings unfitted by their education and habits to be gracious and affable hosts. They had been born and bred on the Continent. They never felt themselves at home in our island. If they spoke our language, they spoke it inelegantly and with effort. Our national character they never fully understood. Our national manners they hardly attempted to acquire. The most important part of their duty they performed better than any ruler who had preceded them: for they governed strictly according to law: but they could not be the first gentlemen of the realm, the heads of polite society. If ever they unbent, it was in a very small circle where hardly an English face was to be seen; and they were never so happy as when they could escape for a summer to their native land. They had indeed their days of reception for our nobility and

gentry; but the reception was mere matter of form, and became at last as solemn a ceremony as a funeral.

Not such was the court of Charles the Second. Whitehall, when he dwelt there, was the focus of political intrigue and of fashionable gaiety. Half the jobbing and half the flirting of the metropolis went on under his roof. Whoever could make himself agreeable to the prince, or could secure the good offices of the mistress, might hope to rise in the world without rendering any service to the government, without being even known by sight to any minister of state. This courtier got a frigate, and that a company; a third the pardon of a rich offender; a fourth, a lease of crown land on easy terms. If the King notified his pleasure that a briefless lawyer should be made a judge, or that a libertine baronet should be made a peer, the gravest counsellors, after a little murmuring, submitted.<sup>1</sup> Interest, therefore, drew a constant press of suitors to the gates of the palace; and those gates always stood wide. The King kept open house every day, and all day long, for the good society of London, the extreme Whigs only excepted. Hardly any gentleman had any difficulty in making his way to the royal presence. The levee was exactly what the word imports. Some men of quality came every morning to stand round their master, to chat with him while his wig was combed and his cravat tied, and to accompany him

<sup>1</sup> See Sir Roger North's account of the way in which Wright was made a judge, and Clarendon's account of the way in which Sir George Savile was made a peer.

in his early walk through the Park. All persons who had been properly introduced might, without any special invitation, go to see him dine, sup, dance, and play at hazard, and might have the pleasure of hearing him tell stories, which indeed he told remarkably well, about his flight from Worcester, and about the misery which he had endured when he was a state prisoner in the hands of the canting meddling preachers of Scotland. Bystanders whom His Majesty recognised often came in for a courteous word. This proved a far more successful kingcraft than any that his father or grandfather had practised. It was not easy for the most austere republican of the school of Marvel to resist the fascination of so much good humour and affability: and many a veteran Cavalier, in whose heart the remembrance of unrequited sacrifices and services had been festering during twenty years, was compensated in one moment for wounds and sequestrations by his sovereign's kind nod, and "God bless you, my old friend!"

Whitehall naturally became the chief staple of news. Whenever there was a rumour that anything important had happened or was about to happen, people hastened thither to obtain intelligence from the fountain head. The galleries presented the appearance of a modern club room at an anxious time. They were full of people inquiring whether the Dutch mail was in, what tidings the express from France had brought, whether John Sobiesky had beaten the

*John Sobiesky.* King of Poland, famous for defeating the Turks and raising the siege of Vienna, 1683.

Turks, whether the Doge of Genoa was really at Paris. These were matters about which it was safe to talk aloud. But there were subjects concerning which information was asked and given in whispers. Had Halifax got the better of Rochester? Was there to be a Parliament? Was the Duke of York really going to Scotland? Had Monmouth really been summoned from the Hague? Men tried to read the countenance of every minister as he went through the throng to and from the royal closet. All sorts of auguries were drawn from the tone in which His Majesty spoke to the Lord President, or from the laugh with which His Majesty honoured a jest of the Lord Privy Seal; and in a few hours the hopes and fears inspired by such slight indications had spread to all the coffee houses from St. James's to the Tower.<sup>1</sup>

The coffee house must not be dismissed with a cursory mention. It might indeed at that time have been not improperly called a most important political institution. No Parliament had sat for years. The municipal council of the City had ceased to speak the sense of the citizens. Public meetings, harangues, resolutions, and the rest of the modern machinery of agitation had not yet come into fashion. Nothing resembling the modern newspaper existed. In such

<sup>1</sup> The sources from which I have drawn my information about the state of the court are too numerous to recapitulate. Among them are the Despatches of Barillon, Van Citters, Ronquillo, and Adda, the *Travels of the Grand Duke Cosmo*, the Diaries of Pepys, Evelyn, and Teonge, and the Memoirs of Grammont and Reresby.



circumstances the coffee houses were the chief organs through which the public opinion of the metropolis vented itself.

The first of these establishments had been set up, in the time of the Commonwealth, by a Turkey merchant, who had acquired among the Mahometans a taste for their favourite beverage. The convenience of being able to make appointments in any part of the town, and of being able to pass evenings socially at a very small charge, was so great that the fashion spread fast. Every man of the upper or middle class went daily to his coffee house to learn the news and to discuss it. Every coffee house had one or more orators to whose eloquence the crowd listened with admiration, and who soon became, what the journalists of our own time have been called, a fourth Estate of the realm. The court had long seen with uneasiness the growth of this new power in the state. An attempt had been made, during Danby's administration, to close the coffee houses. But men of all parties missed their usual places of resort so much that there was an universal outcry. The government did not venture, in opposition to a feeling so strong and general, to enforce a regulation of which the legality might well be questioned. Since that time ten years had elapsed, and during those years the number and influence of the coffee houses had been constantly increasing. Foreigners remarked that the coffee house was that which especially distinguished London from all other cities; that the coffee house

*Danby. Chief Minister of Charles II., 1673-78.*

was the Londoner's home, and that those who wished to find a gentleman commonly asked, not whether he lived in Fleet Street or Chancery Lane, but whether he frequented the Grecian or the Rainbow. Nobody was excluded from these places who laid down his penny at the bar. Yet every rank and profession, and every shade of religious and political opinion, had its own head quarters. There were houses near St. James's Park where fops congregated, their heads and shoulders covered with black or flaxen wigs, not less ample than those which are now worn by the Chancellor and by the Speaker of the House of Commons. The wig came from Paris; and so did the rest of the fine gentleman's ornaments, his embroidered coat, his fringed gloves, and the tassel which upheld his pantaloons. The conversation was in that dialect which, long after it had ceased to be spoken in fashionable circles, continued, in the mouth of Lord Foppington, to excite the mirth of theatres.<sup>1</sup> The atmosphere was like that of a perfumer's shop. Tobacco in any other form than that of richly scented snuff was held in abomination. If any clown, ignorant of the usages of the house, called for a pipe, the sneers of the whole assembly and the short answers of the waiters soon convinced him that he had better go somewhere else. Nor, indeed, would he have had far

<sup>1</sup> The chief peculiarity of this dialect was that, in a large class of words, the O was pronounced like A. Thus stork was pronounced stark. See Vanbrugh's *Relapse*. Lord Sunderland was a great master of this court tune, as Roger North calls it; and Titus Oates affected it in the hope of passing for a fine gentleman. *Examen*, 77, 254.

to go. For, in general, the coffee rooms reeked with tobacco like a guardroom; and strangers sometimes expressed their surprise that so many people should leave their own firesides to sit in the midst of eternal fog and stench. Nowhere was the smoking more constant than at Will's. That celebrated house, situated between Covent Garden and Bow Street, was sacred to polite letters. There the talk was about poetical justice and the unities of place and time. There was a faction for Perrault and the moderns, a faction for Boileau and the ancients. One group debated whether *Paradise Lost* ought not to have been in rhyme. To another an envious poetaster demonstrated that *Venice Preserved* ought to have been hooted from the stage. Under no roof was a greater variety of figures to be seen, Earls in stars and garters, clergymen in cassocks and bands, pert Templars, sheepish lads from the Universities, translators and index makers in ragged coats of frieze. The great press was to get near the chair where John Dryden sate. In winter that chair was always in the warmest nook by the fire; in summer it stood in the balcony. To bow to him, and to hear his opinion of Racine's last tragedy or of Bossu's treatise on epic poetry, was thought a privilege. A pinch from his snuff box was an honour sufficient to turn the head of a young enthusiast. There were coffee houses where the first medical men might be con-

*There was a faction, etc.* Great controversy as to the rival claims for supremacy of ancient and modern writers. Swift's *Battle of the Books* is a famous "skit" on this question.

sulted. Doctor John Radcliffe, who, in the year 1685, rose to the largest practice in London, came daily, at the hour when the Exchange was full, from his house in Bow Street, then a fashionable part of the capital, to Garraway's, and was to be found, surrounded by surgeons and apothecaries, at a particular table. There were Puritan coffee houses where no oath was heard, and where lankhaired men discussed election and reprobation through their noses; Jew coffee houses where dark eyed money changers from Venice and from Amsterdam greeted each other; and Popish coffee houses where, as good Protestants believed, Jesuits planned, over their cups, another great fire, and cast silver bullets to shoot the King.<sup>1</sup>

These gregarious habits had no small share in forming the character of the Londoner of that age. He was, indeed, a different being from the rustic Englishman. There was not then the intercourse which now exists between the two classes. Only very great men were in the habit of dividing the year between town and country. Few esquires came to the capital thrice in their lives. Nor was it yet the practice of all citizens in easy circumstances to breathe the fresh air of the fields and woods

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres sur les Anglois*; Tom Brown's *Tour*; Ward's *London Spy*; *The Character of a Coffee House*, 1673; *Rules and Orders of the Coffee House*, 1674; *Coffee Houses Vindicated*, 1675; *A Satyr against Coffee*; North's *Examen*, 138; *Life of Guildford*, 152; *Life of Sir Dudley North*, 149; *Life of Dr. Radcliffe*, published by Curll in 1715. The liveliest description of Will's is in the *City and Country Mouse*. There is a remarkable passage about the influence of the coffee house orators in Halstead's *Succinct Genealogies*, printed in 1685.

during some weeks of every summer. A cockney, in a rural village, was stared at as much as if he had intruded into a Kraal of Hottentots. On the other hand, when the lord of a Lincolnshire or Shropshire manor appeared in Fleet Street, he was as easily distinguished from the resident population as a Turk or a Lascar. His dress, his gait, his accent, the manner in which he stared at the shops, stumbled into the gutters, ran against the porters, and stood under the waterspouts, marked him out as an excellent subject for the operations of swindlers and banterers. Bullies jostled him into the kennel. Hackney coachmen splashed him from head to foot. Thieves explored with perfect security the huge pockets of his horseman's coat, while he stood entranced by the splendour of the Lord Mayor's show. Moneydroppers, sore from the cart's tail, introduced themselves to him, and appeared to him the most honest friendly gentlemen that he had ever seen. Painted women, the refuse of Lewkner Lane and Whetstone Park, passed themselves on him for countesses and maids of honour. If he asked his way to St. James's, his informants sent him to Mile End. If he went into a shop, he was instantly discerned to be a fit purchaser of everything that nobody else would buy, of secondhand embroidery, copper rings, and watches that would not go. If he rambled into any fashionable coffee house, he became a mark

*Moneydroppers.* Confidence-trick men who pretended to pick up money in the street which they had previously dropped, and thus gained an introduction to wealthy strangers.

for the insolent derision of fops and the grave wag-gery of Templars. Enraged and mortified, he soon returned to his mansion, and there, in the homage of his tenants, and the conversation of his boon companions, found consolation for the vexations and humiliations which he had undergone. There he once more felt himself a great man; and he saw nothing above him except when at the assizes he took his seat on the bench near the Judge, or when at the muster of the militia he saluted the Lord Lieutenant.

The chief cause which made the fusion of the different elements of society so imperfect was the extreme difficulty which our ancestors found in passing from place to place. Of all inventions, the alphabet and the printing press alone excepted, those inventions which abridge distance have done most for the civilisation of our species. Every improvement of the means of locomotion benefits mankind morally and intellectually as well as materially, and not only facilitates the interchange of the various productions of nature and art, but tends to remove national and provincial antipathies, and to bind together all the branches of the great human family. In the seventeenth century the inhabitants of London were, for almost every practical purpose, farther from Reading than they now are from Edinburgh, and farther from Edinburgh than they now are from Vienna.



## VII. ROADS AND TRAVEL

The subjects of Charles the Second were not, it is true, quite unacquainted with that principle which has, in our own time, produced an unprecedented revolution in human affairs, which has enabled navies to advance in the face of wind and tide, and battalions, attended by all their baggage and artillery, to traverse kingdoms at a pace equal to that of the fleetest race horse. The Marquess of Worcester had recently observed the expansive power of moisture rarefied by heat. After many experiments he had succeeded in constructing a rude steam engine, which he called a fire water work, and which he pronounced to be an admirable and most forcible instrument of propulsion.<sup>1</sup> But the Marquess was suspected to be a madman, and known to be a Papist. His inventions, therefore, found no favourable reception. His fire water work might, perhaps, furnish matter for conversation at a meeting of the Royal Society, but was not applied to any practical purpose. There were no railways, except a few made of timber, from the mouths of the Northumbrian coal pits to the banks of the Tyne.<sup>2</sup> There was very little internal communication by water. A few attempts had been made to deepen and embank the natural streams, but with slender success. Hardly a single navigable canal had been even projected. The English of that

<sup>1</sup> *Century of Inventions*, 1663, No. 68.

<sup>2</sup> *North's Life of Guildford*, 136.

day were in the habit of talking with mingled admiration and despair of the immense trench by which Lewis the Fourteenth had made a junction between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. They little thought that their country would, in the course of a few generations, be intersected, at the cost of private adventurers, by artificial rivers making up more than four times the length of the Thames, the Severn, and the Trent together.

It was by the highways that both travellers and goods generally passed from place to place. And those highways appear to have been far worse than might have been expected from the degree of wealth and civilisation which the nation had even then attained. On the best lines of communication the ruts were deep, the descents precipitous, and the way often such as it was hardly possible to distinguish, in the dusk, from the uninclosed heath and fen which lay on both sides. Ralph Thoresby, the antiquary, was in danger of losing his way on the great North road, between Barnby Moor and Tuxford, and actually lost his way between Doncaster and York.<sup>1</sup> Pepys and his wife, travelling in their own coach, lost their way between Newbury and Reading. In the course of the same tour they lost their way near Salisbury, and were in danger of having to pass the night on the plain.<sup>2</sup> It was only in fine weather that

<sup>1</sup> Thoresby's *Diary*, 21st October, 1680, 3rd August, 1712.

<sup>2</sup> Pepys's *Diary*, 12th and 16th June, 1668.

*Immense trench.* Languedoc Canal, between Toulouse and Narbonne, 1681.

the whole breadth of the road was available for wheeled vehicles. Often the mud lay deep on the right and the left; and only a narrow track of firm ground rose above the quagmire.<sup>1</sup> At such times obstructions and quarrels were frequent, and the path was sometimes blocked up during a long time by carriers, neither of whom would break the way. It happened, almost every day, that coaches stuck fast, until a team of cattle could be procured from some neighbouring farm, to tug them out of the slough. But in bad seasons the traveller had to encounter inconveniences still more serious. Thoresby, who was in the habit of travelling between Leeds and the capital, has recorded, in his *Diary*, such a series of perils and disasters as might suffice for a journey to the Frozen Ocean or to the Desert of Sahara. On one occasion he learned that the floods were out between Ware and London, that passengers had to swim for their lives, and that a higgler had perished in the attempt to cross. In consequence of these tidings he turned out of the high road, and was conducted across some meadows, where it was necessary for him to ride to the saddle skirts in water.<sup>2</sup> In the course of another journey he narrowly escaped being swept away by an inundation of the Trent. He was afterwards detained at Stamford four days, on account of the state of the roads, and then ventured to proceed only because fourteen members of the House of Commons, who were going up in

<sup>1</sup> Pepys's *Diary*, 28th February, 1660.

<sup>2</sup> Thoresby's *Diary*, 17th May, 1695.

a body to Parliament, with guides and numerous attendants, took him into their company.<sup>1</sup> On the roads of Derbyshire travellers were in constant fear for their necks, and were frequently compelled to alight and lead their beasts.<sup>2</sup> The great route through Wales to Holyhead was in such a state that, in 1685, a viceroy, going to Ireland, was five hours in travelling fourteen miles, from St. Asaph to Conway. Between Conway and Beaumaris he was forced to walk great part of the way; and his lady was carried in a litter. His coach was, with great difficulty, and by the help of many hands, brought after him entire. In general, carriages were taken to pieces at Conway, and borne, on the shoulders of stout Welsh peasants, to the Menai Straits.<sup>3</sup> In some parts of Kent and Sussex none but the strongest horses could, in winter, get through the bog, in which, at every step, they sank deep. The markets were often inaccessible during several months. It is said that the fruits of the earth were sometimes suffered to rot in one place, while in another place, distant only a few miles, the supply fell far short of the demand. The wheeled carriages were, in this district, generally pulled by oxen.<sup>4</sup> When Prince George of Denmark visited the stately mansion of Petworth in wet weather, he was

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 27th December, 1708.

<sup>2</sup> *Tour in Derbyshire*, by J. Browne, son of Sir Thomas Browne, 1662; Cotton's *Angler*, 1676.

<sup>3</sup> *Correspondence of Henry Earl of Clarendon*, 30th December, 1685, 1st January, 1686.

<sup>4</sup> Postlethwaite's *Dictionary*, Roads. *History of Hawk-hurst*, in the *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica*.

six hours in going nine miles; and it was necessary that a body of sturdy hinds should be on each side of his coach, in order to prop it. Of the carriages which conveyed his retinue several were upset and injured. A letter from one of his gentlemen in waiting has been preserved, in which the unfortunate courtier complains that, during fourteen hours, he never once alighted, except when his coach was overturned or stuck fast in the mud.<sup>1</sup>

One chief cause of the badness of the roads seems to have been the defective state of the law. Every parish was bound to repair the highways which passed through it. The peasantry were forced to give their gratuitous labour six days in the year. If this was not sufficient, hired labour was employed, and the expense was met by a parochial rate. That a route connecting two great towns, which have a large and thriving trade with each other, should be maintained at the cost of the rural population scattered between them is obviously unjust; and this injustice was peculiarly glaring in the case of the great North road, which traversed very poor and thinly inhabited districts, and joined very rich and populous districts. Indeed it was not in the power of the parishes of Huntingdonshire to mend a highway worn by the constant traffic between the West Riding of Yorkshire and London. Soon after the Restoration this grievance attracted the notice of Parliament; and an Act, the first of our many turnpike Acts, was passed, imposing a small toll on travellers and goods,

<sup>1</sup> *Annals of Queen Anne*, 1703, Appendix, No. 3.

for the purpose of keeping some parts of this important line of communication in good repair.<sup>1</sup> This innovation, however, excited many murmurs; and the other great avenues to the capital were long left under the old system. A change was at length effected, but not without much difficulty. For unjust and absurd taxation to which men are accustomed is often borne far more willingly than the most reasonable impost which is new. It was not till many toll bars had been violently pulled down, till the troops had in many districts been forced to act against the people, and till much blood had been shed, that a good system was introduced.<sup>2</sup> By slow degrees reason triumphed over prejudice; and our island is now crossed in every direction by near thirty thousand miles of turnpike road.

On the best highways heavy articles were, in the time of Charles the Second, generally conveyed from place to place by stage waggons. In the straw of these vehicles nestled a crowd of passengers, who could not afford to travel by coach or on horseback, and who were prevented by infirmity, or by the weight of their luggage, from going on foot. The expense of transmitting heavy goods in this way was enormous. From London to Birmingham the charge was seven pounds a ton; from London to

<sup>1</sup> 15 Car. II. c. i.

<sup>2</sup> The evils of the old system are strikingly set forth in many petitions which appear in the *Commons' Journal* of 1725/6. How fierce an opposition was offered to the new system may be learned from the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1749.



Exeter twelve pounds a ton.<sup>1</sup> This was about fifteen pence a ton for every mile, more by a third than was afterwards charged on turnpike roads, and fifteen times what is now demanded by railway companies. The cost of conveyance amounted to a prohibitory tax on many useful articles. Coal in particular was never seen except in the districts where it was produced, or in the districts to which it could be carried by sea, and was indeed always known in the South of England by the name of sea coal.

On by-roads, and generally throughout the country north of York and west of Exeter, goods were carried by long trains of packhorses. These strong and patient beasts, the breed of which is now extinct, were attended by a class of men who seem to have borne much resemblance to the Spanish muleteers. A traveller of humble condition often found it convenient to perform a journey mounted on a pack-saddle between two baskets, under the care of these hardy guides. The expense of this mode of conveyance was small. But the caravan moved at a foot's pace; and in winter the cold was often insupportable.<sup>2</sup>

The rich commonly travelled in their own carriages, with at least four horses. Cotton, the facetious poet, attempted to go from London to the Peak with a single pair, but found at Saint Albans that the journey would be insupportably tedious, and altered

<sup>1</sup> Postlethwaite's *Dictionary*, Roads.

<sup>2</sup> *Loidis and Elmete*. Marshall's *Rural Economy of England*. In 1739 Roderic Random came from Scotland to Newcastle on a packhorse.

his plan.<sup>1</sup> A coach and six is in our time never seen, except as part of some pageant. The frequent mention therefore of such equipages in old books is likely to mislead us. We attribute to magnificence what was really the effect of a very disagreeable necessity. People, in the time of Charles the Second, travelled with six horses, because with a smaller number there was great danger of sticking fast in the mire. Nor were even six horses always sufficient. Vanbrugh, in the succeeding generation, described with great humour the way in which a country gentleman, newly chosen a member of Parliament, went up to London. On that occasion all the exertions of six beasts, two of which had been taken from the plough, could not save the family coach from being imbedded in a quagmire.

Public carriages had recently been much improved. During the years which immediately followed the Restoration, a diligence ran between London and Oxford in two days. The passengers slept at Beaconsfield. At length, in the spring of 1669, a great and daring innovation was attempted. It was announced that a vehicle, described as the Flying Coach, would perform the whole journey between sunrise and sunset. This spirited undertaking was solemnly considered and sanctioned by the Heads of the University, and appears to have excited the same sort of interest which is excited in our own time by the opening of a new railway. The Vice-chancellor, by a notice affixed in all public places,

<sup>1</sup> Cotton's *Epistle to J. Bradshaw*.

prescribed the hour and place of departure. The success of the experiment was complete. At six in the morning the carriage began to move from before the ancient front of All Souls College: and at seven in the evening the adventurous gentlemen who had run the first risk were safely deposited at their inn in London.<sup>1</sup> The emulation of the sister University was moved; and soon a diligence was set up which in one day carried passengers from Cambridge to the capital. At the close of the reign of Charles the Second, flying carriages ran thrice a week from London to the chief towns. But no stage coach, indeed no stage waggon, appears to have proceeded further north than York, or further west than Exeter. The ordinary day's journey of a flying coach was about fifty miles in the summer; but in winter, when the ways were bad and the nights long, little more than thirty. The Chester coach, the York coach, and the Exeter coach generally reached London in four days during the fine season, but at Christmas not till the sixth day. The passengers, six in number, were all seated in the carriage. For accidents were so frequent that it would have been most perilous to mount the roof. The ordinary fare was about twopence halfpenny a mile in summer, and somewhat more in winter.<sup>2</sup>

This mode of travelling, which by Englishmen of the present day would be regarded as insufferably

<sup>1</sup> Anthony à Wood's *Life* of himself.

<sup>2</sup> Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684. See also the list of stage coaches and wagons at the end of the book, entitled *Angliæ Metropolis*, 1690.

slow, seemed to our ancestors wonderfully and indeed alarmingly rapid. In a work published a few months before the death of Charles the Second, the flying coaches are extolled as far superior to any similar vehicles ever known in the world. Their velocity is the subject of special commendation, and is triumphantly contrasted with the sluggish pace of the continental posts. But with boasts like these was mingled the sound of complaint and invective. The interests of large classes had been unfavourably affected by the establishment of the new diligences; and, as usual, many persons were, from mere stupidity and obstinacy, disposed to clamour against the innovation, simply because it was an innovation. It was vehemently argued that this mode of conveyance would be fatal to the breed of horses and to the noble art of horsemanship; that the Thames, which had long been an important nursery of seamen, would cease to be the chief thoroughfare from London up to Windsor and down to Gravesend; that saddlers and spurriers would be ruined by hundreds; that numerous inns, at which mounted travellers had been in the habit of stopping, would be deserted, and would no longer pay any rent; that the new carriages were too hot in summer and too cold in winter; that the passengers were grievously annoyed by invalids and crying children; that the coach sometimes reached the inn so late that it was impossible to get supper, and sometimes started so early that it was impossible to get breakfast. On these grounds it was gravely recommended that no

public carriage should be permitted to have more than four horses, to start oftener than once a week, or to go more than thirty miles a day. It was hoped that, if this regulation were adopted, all except the sick and the lame would return to the old mode of travelling. Petitions embodying such opinions as these were presented to the King in council from several companies of the City of London, from several provincial towns, and from the justices of several counties. We smile at these things. It is not impossible that our descendants, when they read the history of the opposition offered by cupidity and prejudice to the improvements of the nineteenth century, may smile in their turn.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the attractions of the flying coaches, it was still usual for men who enjoyed health and vigour, and who were not encumbered by much baggage, to perform long journeys on horseback. If the traveller wished to move expeditiously he rode post. Fresh saddle horses and guides were to be procured at convenient distances along all the great lines of road. The charge was threepence a mile for each horse, and fourpence a stage for the guide. In this manner, when the ways were good, it was possible to travel, for a considerable time, as rapidly as by any conveyance known in England, till vehicles were propelled by steam. There

<sup>1</sup> John Cresset's *Reasons for suppressing Stage Coaches*, 1672. These reasons were afterwards inserted in a tract, entitled *The Grand Concern of England explained*, 1673. Cresset's attack on stage coaches called forth some answers which I have consulted.

were as yet no post chaises; nor could those who rode in their own coaches ordinarily procure a change of horses. The King, however, and the great officers of state were able to command relays. Thus Charles commonly went in one day from Whitehall to Newmarket, a distance of about fifty-five miles through a level country; and this was thought by his subjects a proof of great activity. Evelyn performed the same journey in company with the Lord Treasurer Clifford. The coach was drawn by six horses, which were changed at Bishop Stortford and again at Chesterford. The travellers reached Newmarket at night. Such a mode of conveyance seems to have been considered as a rare luxury confined to princes and ministers.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever might be the way in which a journey was performed, the travellers, unless they were numerous and well armed, ran considerable risk of being stopped and plundered. The mounted highwayman, a marauder known to our generation only from books, was to be found on every main road. The waste tracts which lay on the great routes near London were especially haunted by plunderers of this class. Hounslow Heath, on the great Western Road, and Finchley Common, on the great Northern Road, were perhaps the most celebrated of these spots. The Cambridge scholars trembled when they approached Epping Forest, even in broad daylight. Seamen who had just been paid off at Chatham were

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684. North's *Examen*, 105. Evelyn's *Diary*, 9th and 10th October, 1671.



often compelled to deliver their purses on Gadshill, celebrated near a hundred years earlier by the greatest of poets as the scene of the depredations of Poins and Falstaff. The public authorities seem to have been often at a loss how to deal with the plunderers. At one time it was announced in the *Gazette* that several persons, who were strongly suspected of being highwaymen, but against whom there was not sufficient evidence, would be paraded at Newgate in riding dresses: their horses would also be shown: and all gentlemen who had been robbed were invited to inspect this singular exhibition. On another occasion a pardon was publicly offered to a robber if he would give up some rough diamonds, of immense value, which he had taken when he stopped the Harwich mail. A short time after appeared another proclamation, warning the innkeepers that the eye of the government was upon them. Their criminal connivance, it was affirmed, enabled banditti to infest the roads with impunity. That these suspicions were not without foundation, is proved by the dying speeches of some penitent robbers of that age, who appear to have received from the innkeepers services much resembling those which Farquhar's Boniface rendered to Gibbet.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the *London Gazette*, 14th May, 1677, 4th August, 1687, 5th December, 1687. The last confession of Augustin King, who was the son of an eminent divine, and had been educated at Cambridge, but was hanged at Colchester in March 1688, is highly curious.

*Boniface* is an innkeeper in Farquhar's play *The Beaux' Stratagem*. He gives information and help to Gibbet, a highwayman.

It was necessary to the success and even to the safety of the highwayman that he should be a bold and skilful rider, and that his manners and appearance should be such as suited the master of a fine horse. He therefore held an aristocratical position in the community of thieves, appeared at fashionable coffee houses and gaming houses, and betted with men of quality on the race ground.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, indeed, he was a man of good family and education. A romantic interest therefore attached, and perhaps still attaches, to the names of freebooters of this class. The vulgar eagerly drank in tales of their ferocity and audacity, of their occasional acts of generosity and good nature, of their amours, of their miraculous escapes, of their desperate struggles, and of their manly bearing at the bar and in the cart. Thus it was related of William Nevison, the great robber of Yorkshire, that he levied a quarterly tribute on all the northern drovers, and, in return, not only spared them himself, but protected them against all other thieves; that he demanded purses in the most courteous manner; that he gave largely to the poor what he had taken from the rich; that his life was once spared by the royal clemency, but that he again tempted his fate, and at length died, in 1685, on the gallows of York.<sup>2</sup> It was related

<sup>1</sup> *Aimwell*. Pray sir, han't I seen your face at Will's coffee-house?

*Gibbet*. Yes, sir, and at White's too.—*Beaux' Stratagem*.

<sup>2</sup> *Gent's History of York*. Another marauder of the same description, named Biss, was hanged at Salisbury in 1695. In a

how Claude Duval, the French page of the Duke of Richmond, took to the road, became captain of a formidable gang, and had the honour to be named first in a royal proclamation against notorious offenders; how at the head of his troop he stopped a lady's coach, in which there was a booty of four hundred pounds; how he took only one hundred, and suffered the fair owner to ransom the rest by dancing a coranto with him on the heath; how his vivacious gallantry stole away the hearts of all women; how his dexterity at sword and pistol made him a terror to all men; how, at length, in the year 1670, he was seized when overcome by wine; how dames of high rank visited him in prison, and with tears interceded for his life; how the King would have granted a pardon, but for the interference of Judge Morton, the terror of highwaymen, who threatened to resign his office unless the law were carried into full effect; and how, after the execution, the corpse lay in state with all the pomp of scutcheons, wax lights, black hangings and mutes, till the same cruel Judge, who had intercepted the mercy of the crown, sent officers to disturb the obsequies.<sup>1</sup> In these anecdotes there is doubtless a large mixture

ballad which is in the Pepysian Library, he is represented as defending himself thus before the Judge:

What say you now, my honoured Lord,  
 What harm was there in this?  
 Rich, wealthy misers were abhorred  
 By brave, freehearted Biss.

<sup>1</sup> Pope's *Memoirs of Duval*, published immediately after the execution. Oates's *Εἰκὼν Βασιλική*, Part I.

of fable; but they are not on that account unworthy of being recorded; for it is both an authentic and an important fact that such tales, whether false or true, were heard by our ancestors with eagerness and faith.

All the various dangers by which the traveller was beset were greatly increased by darkness. He was therefore commonly desirous of having the shelter of a roof during the night; and such shelter it was not difficult to obtain. From a very early period the inns of England had been renowned. Our first great poet had described the excellent accommodation which they afforded to the pilgrims of the fourteenth century. Nine and twenty persons, with their horses, found room in the wide chambers and stables of the Tabard in Southwark. The food was of the best, and the wines such as drew the company on to drink largely. Two hundred years later, under the reign of Elizabeth, William Harrison gave a lively description of the plenty and comfort of the great hostelries. The Continent of Europe, he said, could show nothing like them. There were some in which two or three hundred people, with their horses, could without difficulty be lodged and fed. The bedding, the tapestry, above all, the abundance of clean and fine linen was matter of wonder. Valuable plate was often set on the tables. Nay, there were signs which had cost thirty or forty pounds. In the seventeenth century England abounded with excellent inns of every rank. The traveller sometimes, in a small village, lighted on a public house such as Walton has described, where

the brick floor was swept clean, where the walls were stuck round with ballads, where the sheets smelt of lavender, and where a blazing fire, a cup of good ale, and a dish of trouts fresh from the neighbouring brook, were to be procured at small charge. At the larger houses of entertainment were to be found beds hung with silk, choice cookery, and claret equal to the best which was drunk in London.<sup>1</sup> The innkeepers too, it was said, were not like other innkeepers. On the Continent the landlord was the tyrant of those who crossed the threshold. In England he was a servant. Never was an Englishman more at home than when he took his ease in his inn. Even men of fortune, who might in their own mansions have enjoyed every luxury, were often in the habit of passing their evenings in the parlour of some neighbouring house of public entertainment. They seem to have thought that comfort and freedom could in no other place be enjoyed in equal perfection. This feeling continued during many generations to be a national peculiarity. The liberty and jollity of inns long furnished matter to our novelists and dramatists. Johnson declared that a tavern chair was the throne of human felicity; and Shenstone gently complained that no private roof, however friendly, gave the wanderer so warm a welcome as that which was to be found at an inn.

<sup>1</sup> See the prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, Harrison's *Historical Description of the Island of Great Britain*, and Pepys's account of his tour in the summer of 1668. The excellence of the English inns is noticed in the *Travels of the Grand Duke Cosmo*.

Many conveniences, which were unknown at Hampton Court and Whitehall in the seventeenth century, are to be found in our modern hotels. Yet on the whole it is certain that the improvement of our houses of public entertainment has by no means kept pace with the improvement of our roads and of our conveyances. Nor is this strange; for it is evident that, all other circumstances being supposed equal, the inns will be best where the means of locomotion are worst. The quicker the rate of travelling, the less important is it that there should be numerous agreeable resting places for the traveller. A hundred and sixty years ago a person came up to the capital from a remote county generally required twelve or fifteen meals, and lodging for five or six nights by the way. If he were a great man, he expected the meals and lodging to be comfortable, and even luxurious. At present we fly from York or Exeter to London by the light of a single winter's day. At present, therefore, a traveller seldom interrupts his journey merely for the sake of rest and refreshment. The consequence is that hundreds of excellent inns have fallen into utter decay. In a short time no good houses of that description will be found, except at places where strangers are likely to be detained by business or pleasure.

The mode in which correspondence was carried on between distant places may excite the scorn of the present generation; yet it was such as might have moved the admiration and envy of the polished nations of antiquity, or of the contemporaries of



Raleigh and Cecil. A rude and imperfect establishment of posts for the conveyance of letters had been set up by Charles the First, and had been swept away by the civil war. Under the Commonwealth the design was resumed. At the Restoration the proceeds of the Post Office, after all expenses had been paid, were settled on the Duke of York. On most lines of road the mails went out and came in only on the alternate days. In Cornwall, in the fens of Lincolnshire, and among the hills and lakes of Cumberland, letters were received only once a week. During a royal progress a daily post was despatched from the capital to the place where the court sojourned. There was also daily communication between London and the Downs; and the same privilege was sometimes extended to Tunbridge Wells and Bath at the seasons when those places were crowded by the great. The bags were carried on horseback day and night at the rate of about five miles an hour.<sup>1</sup>

The revenue of this establishment was not derived solely from the charge for the transmission of letters. The Post Office alone was entitled to furnish post horses; and, from the care with which this monopoly was guarded, we may infer that it was found profitable.<sup>2</sup> If, indeed, a traveller had waited half an hour without being supplied, he might hire a horse wherever he could.

<sup>1</sup> Stat. 12 Car. II. c. 35. Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684. *Angliæ Metropolis*, 1690. *London Gazette*, 22nd June, 1685, 15th August, 1687.

<sup>2</sup> *London Gazette*, 14th September, 1685.

To facilitate correspondence between one part of London and another was not originally one of the objects of the Post Office. But, in the reign of Charles the Second, an enterprising citizen of London, William Dockwray, set up, at great expense, a penny post, which delivered letters and parcels six or eight times a day in the busy and crowded streets near the Exchange, and four times a day in the outskirts of the capital. This improvement was, as usual, strenuously resisted. The porters complained that their interests were attacked, and tore down the placards in which the scheme was announced to the public. The excitement caused by Godfrey's death, and by the discovery of Coleman's papers, was then at the height. A cry was therefore raised that the penny post was a Popish contrivance. The great Doctor Oates, it was affirmed, had hinted a suspicion that the Jesuits were at the bottom of the scheme, and that the bags, if examined, would be found full of treason.<sup>1</sup> The utility of the enterprise was, however, so great and obvious that all opposition proved fruitless. As soon as it became clear that the speculation would be lucrative, the Duke of York complained of it as an infraction of his monopoly, and the courts of law decided in his favour.<sup>2</sup>

The revenue of the Post Office was from the first constantly increasing. In the year of the Restoration a committee of the House of Commons, after strict

<sup>1</sup> Smith's *Current Intelligence*, 30th March and 3rd April, 1680.

<sup>2</sup> *Angliæ Metropolis*, 1690.

inquiry, had estimated the net receipt at about twenty thousand pounds. At the close of the reign of Charles the Second, the net receipt was little short of fifty thousand pounds; and this was then thought a stupendous sum. The gross receipt was about seventy thousand pounds. The charge for conveying a single letter was twopence for eighty miles, and threepence for a longer distance. The postage increased in proportion to the weight of the packet.<sup>1</sup> At present a single letter is carried to the extremity of Scotland or of Ireland for a penny; and the monopoly of post horses has long ceased to exist. Yet the gross annual receipts of the department amount to more than eighteen hundred thousand pounds, and the net receipts to more than seven hundred thousand pounds. It is, therefore, scarcely possible to doubt that the number of letters now conveyed by mail is seventy times the number which was so conveyed at the time of the accession of James the Second.

### VIII. NEWSPAPERS, LITERATURE AND THE THEATRE

No part of the load which the old mails carried out was more important than the newsletters. In 1685 nothing like the London daily paper of our time existed, or could exist. Neither the necessary capital

<sup>1</sup> *Commons' Journals*, 4th September, 1660, 1st March, 1688/9. Chamberlayne, 1684. Davenant on the *Public Revenue*, Discourse IV.

nor the necessary skill was to be found. Freedom too was wanting, a want as fatal as that of either capital or skill. The press was not indeed at that moment under a general censorship. The Licensing Act, which had been passed soon after the Restoration, had expired in 1679. Any person might therefore print, at his own risk, a history, a sermon, or a poem, without the previous approbation of any public officer; but the Judges were unanimously of opinion that this liberty did not extend to Gazettes, and that, by the common law of England, no man, not authorised by the crown, had a right to publish political news.<sup>1</sup> While the Whig party was still formidable, the government thought it expedient occasionally to connive at the violation of this rule. During the great battle of the Exclusion Bill, many newspapers were suffered to appear, the *Protestant Intelligence*, the *Current Intelligence*, the *Domestic Intelligence*, the *True News*, the *London Mercury*.<sup>2</sup> None of these was published oftener than twice a week. None exceeded in size a single small leaf. The quantity of matter which one of them contained in a year was not more than is often found in two numbers of the *Times*. After the defeat of the Whigs it was no longer necessary for the King to be sparing

<sup>1</sup> *London Gazette*, 5th and 17th May, 1680.

<sup>2</sup> There is a very curious and, I should think, unique collection of these papers in the British Museum.

*The Licensing Act, etc.* Under the Licensing Act all new books had to be examined and licensed before they were published. Printing was confined to London, York, Oxford and Cambridge.

in the use of that which all his Judges had pronounced to be his undoubted prerogative. At the close of his reign no newspaper was suffered to appear without his allowance: and his allowance was given exclusively to the *London Gazette*. The *London Gazette* came out only on Mondays and Thursdays. The contents generally were a royal proclamation, two or three Tory addresses, notices of two or three promotions, an account of a skirmish between the imperial troops and the Janissaries on the Danube, a description of a highwayman, an announcement of a grand cockfight between two persons of honour, and an advertisement offering a reward for a strayed dog. The whole made up two pages of moderate size. Whatever was communicated respecting matters of the highest moment was communicated in the most meagre and formal style. Sometimes, indeed, when the government was disposed to gratify the public curiosity respecting an important transaction, a broadside was put forth giving fuller details than could be found in the *Gazette*: but neither the *Gazette* nor any supplementary broadside printed by authority ever contained any intelligence which it did not suit the purposes of the court to publish. The most important parliamentary debates, the most important state trials, recorded in our history, were passed over in profound silence.<sup>1</sup> In the capital the coffee houses supplied in some measure the place of

<sup>1</sup> For example, there is not a word in the *Gazette* about the important parliamentary proceedings of November, 1685, or about the trial and acquittal of the seven Bishops.

a journal. Thither the Londoners flocked, as the Athenians of old flocked to the market place, to hear whether there was any news. There men might learn how brutally a Whig had been treated the day before in Westminster Hall, what horrible accounts the letters from Edinburgh gave of the torturing of Covenanters, how grossly the Navy Board had cheated the crown in the victualling of the fleet, and what grave charges the Lord Privy Seal had brought against the Treasury in the matter of the hearth money. But people who lived at a distance from the great theatre of political contention could be kept regularly informed of what was passing there only by means of newsletters. To prepare such letters became a calling in London, as it now is among the natives of India. The newswriter rambled from coffee room to coffee room, collecting reports, squeezed himself into the Sessions House at the Old Bailey if there was an interesting trial, nay, perhaps obtained admission to the gallery of Whitehall, and noticed how the King and Duke looked. In this way he gathered materials for weekly epistles destined to enlighten some county town or some bench of rustic magistrates. Such were the sources from which the inhabitants of the largest provincial cities, and the great body of the gentry and clergy, learned almost all that they knew of the history of their own time. We must suppose that at Cambridge there were as many persons curious to know what was passing in the world as at almost any place in the kingdom, out of London. Yet at Cambridge,



during a great part of the reign of Charles the Second, the Doctors of Laws and the Masters of Arts had no regular supply of news except through the *London Gazette*. At length the services of one of the collectors of intelligence in the capital were employed. That was a memorable day on which the first newsletter from London was laid on the table of the only coffee room in Cambridge.<sup>1</sup> At the seat of a man of fortune in the country the newsletter was impatiently expected. Within a week after it had arrived it had been thumbed by twenty families. It furnished the neighbouring squires with matter for talk over their October, and the neighbouring rectors with topics for sharp sermons against Whiggery or Popery. Many of these curious journals might doubtless still be detected by a diligent search in the archives of old families. Some are to be found in our public libraries; and one series, which is not the least valuable part of the literary treasures collected by Sir James Mackintosh, will be occasionally quoted in the course of this work.<sup>2</sup>

It is scarcely necessary to say that there were

<sup>1</sup> Roger North's *Life of Dr. John North*. On the subject of newsletters, see the *Examen*, 133.

<sup>2</sup> I take this opportunity of expressing my warm gratitude to the family of my dear and honoured friend Sir James Mackintosh for confiding to me the materials collected by him at a time when he meditated a work similar to that which I have undertaken. I have never seen, and I do not believe that there anywhere exists, within the same compass, so noble a collection of extracts from public and private archives. The judgment with which Sir James, in great masses of the rudest ore of history, selected what was valuable, and rejected what was worthless, can be fully appreciated only by one who has toiled after him in the same mine.

then no provincial newspapers. Indeed, except in the capital and at the two Universities, there was scarcely a printer in the kingdom. The only press in England north of Trent appears to have been at York.<sup>1</sup>

It was not only by means of the *London Gazette* that the government undertook to furnish political instruction to the people. That journal contained a scanty supply of news without comment. Another journal, published under the patronage of the court, consisted of comment without news. This paper, called the *Observer*, was edited by an old Tory pamphleteer named Roger Lestranger. Lestranger was by no means deficient in readiness and shrewdness; and his diction, though coarse, and disfigured by a mean and flippant jargon which then passed for wit in the green room and the tavern, was not without keenness and vigour. But his nature, at once ferocious and ignoble, showed itself in every line that he penned. When the first *Observers* appeared there was some excuse for his acrimony. For the Whigs were then powerful; and he had to contend against numerous adversaries, whose unscrupulous violence might seem to justify unsparing retaliation. But in 1685 all opposition had been crushed. A generous spirit would have disdained to insult a party which could not reply, and to aggravate the

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Thomas Gent.* A complete list of all printing houses in 1724 will be found in Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*. There had then been a great increase within a few years in the number of presses; and yet there were thirty-four counties in which there was no printer, one of those counties being Lancashire.

misery of prisoners, of exiles, of bereaved families: but from the malice of Lestrange the grave was no hiding place, and the house of mourning no sanctuary. In the last month of the reign of Charles the Second, William Jenkyn, an aged dissenting pastor of great note, who had been cruelly persecuted for no crime but that of worshipping God according to the fashion generally followed throughout Protestant Europe, died of hardships and privations in Newgate. The outbreak of popular sympathy could not be repressed. The corpse was followed to the grave by a train of a hundred and fifty coaches. Even courtiers looked sad. Even the unthinking King showed some signs of concern. Lestrange alone set up a howl of savage exultation, laughed at the weak compassion of the Trimmers, proclaimed that the blasphemous old impostor had met with a most righteous punishment, and vowed to wage war, not only to the death, but after death, with all the mock saints and martyrs.<sup>1</sup> Such was the spirit of the paper which was at this time the oracle of the Tory party, and especially of the parochial clergy.

Literature which could be carried by the post bag then formed the greater part of the intellectual nutriment ruminated by the country divines and country justices. The difficulty and expense of conveying large packets from place to place was so great, that an extensive work was longer in making

<sup>1</sup> *Observer*, 29th and 31st January, 1685; Calamy's *Life of Baxter*; *Nonconformist Memorial*.

*Trimmers*. Moderate Party between Tories and Whigs.

its way from Paternoster Row to Devonshire or Lancashire than it now is in reaching Kentucky. How scantily a rural parsonage was then furnished, even with books the most necessary to a theologian, has already been remarked. The houses of the gentry were not more plentifully supplied. Few knights of the shire had libraries so good as may now perpetually be found in a servants' hall, or in the back parlour of a small shopkeeper. An esquire passed among his neighbours for a great scholar, if *Hudibras* and Baker's *Chronicle*, Tarlton's *Jests* and the *Seven Champions of Christendom*, lay in his hall window among the fishing rods and fowling pieces. No circulating library, no book society then existed even in the capital: but in the capital those students who could not afford to purchase largely had a resource. The shops of the great booksellers, near Saint Paul's Churchyard, were crowded every day and all day long with readers; and a known customer was often permitted to carry a volume home. In the country there was no such accommodation; and every man was under the necessity of buying whatever he wished to read.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cotton seems, from his *Angler*, to have found room for his whole library in his hall window; and Cotton was a man of letters. Even when Franklin first visited London in 1724, circulating libraries were unknown there. The crowd at the booksellers' shops in Little Britain is mentioned by Roger North in his *Life* of his brother John.

*Hudibras*. Samuel Butler's satire on the Puritans.

*Baker's Chronicle*. His *Chronicles of the Kings of England*.

*Tarlton*. Famous comedian of the sixteenth century.

*Seven Champions of Christendom*. A sixteenth-century romance of chivalry.

As to the lady of the manor and her daughters, their literary stores generally consisted of a prayer-book and a receipt book. But in truth they lost little by living in rural seclusion. For, even in the highest ranks, and in those situations which afforded the greatest facilities for mental improvement, the English women of that generation were decidedly worse educated than they have been at any other time since the revival of learning. At an earlier period they had studied the masterpieces of ancient genius. In the present day they seldom bestow much attention on the dead languages; but they are familiar with the tongue of Pascal and Molière, with the tongue of Dante and Tasso, with the tongue of Goethe and Schiller; nor is there any purer or more graceful English than that which accomplished women now speak and write. But, during the latter part of the seventeenth century, the culture of the female mind seems to have been almost entirely neglected. If a damsel had the least smattering of literature she was regarded as a prodigy. Ladies highly born, highly bred, and naturally quick witted, were unable to write a line in their mother tongue without solecisms and faults of spelling such as a charity girl would now be ashamed to commit.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One instance will suffice. Queen Mary had good natural abilities, had been educated by a Bishop, was fond of history and poetry, and was regarded by very eminent men as a superior woman. There is, in the library at The Hague, a superb English Bible which was delivered to her when she was crowned in Westminster Abbey. In the title page are these words in her own hand, "This book was given the King and I, at our crowning, Marie R."

The explanation may easily be found. Extravagant licentiousness, the natural effect of extravagant austerity, was now the mode: and licentiousness had produced its ordinary effect, the moral and intellectual degradation of women. To their personal beauty, it was the fashion to pay rude and impudent homage. But the admiration and desire which they inspired were seldom mingled with respect, with affection, or with any chivalrous sentiment. The qualities which fit them to be companions, advisers, confidential friends, rather repelled than attracted the libertines of Whitehall. In that court a maid of honour, who dressed in such a manner as to do full justice to a white bosom, who ogled significantly, who danced voluptuously, who excelled in pert repartee, who was not ashamed to romp with Lords of the Bedchamber and Captains of the Guards, to sing sly verses with sly expression, or to put on a page's dress for a frolic, was more likely to be followed and admired, more likely to be honoured with royal attentions, more likely to win a rich and noble husband than Jane Grey or Lucy Hutchinson would have been. In such circumstances the standard of female attainments was necessarily low; and it was more dangerous to be above that standard than to be beneath it. Extreme ignorance and frivolity were thought less unbecoming in a lady than the slightest tincture of pedantry. Of the too celebrated women whose faces we still admire on the walls of Hampton Court, few indeed were in the habit of reading anything more valuable than acrostics,



lampoons, and translations of the *Clelia* and the *Grand Cyrus*.

The literary acquirements, even of the accomplished gentlemen of that generation, seem to have been somewhat less solid and profound than at an earlier or a later period. Greek learning, at least, did not flourish among us in the days of Charles the Second, as it had flourished before the civil war, or as it again flourished long after the Revolution. There were undoubtedly scholars to whom the whole Greek literature, from Homer to Photius, was familiar: but such scholars were to be found almost exclusively among the clergy resident at the Universities, and even at the Universities were few, and were not fully appreciated. At Cambridge it was not thought by any means necessary that a divine should be able to read the Gospels in the original.<sup>1</sup> Nor was the standard at Oxford higher. When, in the reign of William the Third, Christ Church rose up as one man to defend the genuineness of the Epistles of Phalaris, that great college, then considered as the first seat of philology in the kingdom, could not muster such a stock of Attic learning as is now possessed by several youths at every great public school. It may easily be supposed that a dead language, neglected at the

<sup>1</sup> Roger North tells us that his brother John, who was Greek professor at Cambridge, complained bitterly of the general neglect of the Greek tongue among the academical clergy.

*Clelia*: *Grand Cyrus*. Famous French romances.

*Epistles of Phalaris*. This began the famous dispute on the ancient and modern writers.

Universities, was not much studied by men of the world. In a former age the poetry and eloquence of Greece had been the delight of Raleigh and Falkland. In a later age the poetry and eloquence of Greece were the delight of Pitt and Fox, of Windham and Grenville. But during the latter part of the seventeenth century there was in England scarcely one eminent statesman who could read with enjoyment a page of Sophocles or Plato.

Good Latin scholars were numerous. The language of Rome, indeed, had not altogether lost its imperial character, and was still, in many parts of Europe, almost indispensable to a traveller or a negotiator. To speak it well was therefore a much more common accomplishment than in our time; and neither Oxford nor Cambridge wanted poets who, on a great occasion, could lay at the foot of the throne happy imitations of the verses in which Virgil and Ovid had celebrated the greatness of Augustus.

Yet even the Latin was giving way to a younger rival. France united at that time almost every species of ascendancy. Her military glory was at the height. She had vanquished mighty coalitions. She had dictated treaties. She had subjugated great cities and provinces. She had forced the Castilian pride to yield her the precedence. She had summoned Italian princes to prostrate themselves at her footstool. Her authority was supreme in all matters of good breeding, from a duel to a minuet. She determined how a gentleman's coat must be cut, how long his peruke must be, whether his heels must be high

or low, and whether the lace on his hat must be broad or narrow. In literature she gave law to the world. The fame of her great writers filled Europe. No other country could produce a tragic poet equal to Racine, a comic poet equal to Molière, a trifler so agreeable as La Fontaine, a rhetorician so skilful as Bossuet. The literary glory of Italy and of Spain had set; that of Germany had not yet dawned. The genius, therefore, of the eminent men who adorned Paris shone forth with a splendour which was set off to full advantage by contrast. France, indeed, had at that time an empire over mankind, such as even the Roman Republic never attained. For, when Rome was politically dominant, she was in arts and letters the humble pupil of Greece. France had, over the surrounding countries, at once the ascendancy which Rome had over Greece, and the ascendancy which Greece had over Rome. French was fast becoming the universal language, the language of fashionable society, the language of diplomacy. At several courts princes and nobles spoke it more accurately and politely than their mother tongue. In our island there was less of this servility than on the Continent. Neither our good nor our bad qualities were those of imitators. Yet even here homage was paid, awkwardly indeed and sullenly, to the literary supremacy of our neighbours. The melodious Tuscan, so familiar to the gallants and ladies of the court of Elizabeth, sank into contempt. A gentleman who quoted Horace or Terence was considered in good company as a pompous pedant. But to garnish his

conversation with scraps of French was the best proof which he could give of his parts and attainments.<sup>1</sup> New canons of criticism, new models of style came into fashion. The quaint ingenuity which had deformed the verses of Donne, and had been a blemish on those of Cowley, disappeared from our poetry. Our prose became less majestic, less artfully involved, less variously musical than that of an earlier age, but more lucid, more easy, and better fitted for controversy and narrative. In these changes it is impossible not to recognise the influence of French precept and of French example. Great masters of our language, in their most dignified compositions, affected to use French words, when English words, quite as expressive and melodious, were at hand:<sup>2</sup> and from France was imported the tragedy in rhyme, an exotic which, in our soil, drooped, and speedily died.

It would have been well if our writers had also copied the decorum which their great French contemporaries, with few exceptions, preserved; for the profligacy of the English plays, satires, songs, and novels of that age is a deep blot on our national fame.

<sup>1</sup> Butler, in a satire of great asperity, says,

For, though to smatter words of Greek  
And Latin be the rhetorique  
Of pedants counted, and vainglorious,  
To smatter French is meritorious.

<sup>2</sup> The most offensive instance which I remember is in a poem on the coronation of Charles the Second by Dryden, who certainly could not plead poverty as an excuse for borrowing words from any foreign tongue:

Hither in summer evenings you repair  
To taste the *fraicheur* of the cooler air.

The evil may easily be traced to its source. The wits and the Puritans had never been on friendly terms. There was no sympathy between the two classes. They looked on the whole system of human life from different points and in different lights. The earnest of each was the jest of the other. The pleasures of each were the torments of the other. To the stern precisian even the innocent sport of the fancy seemed a crime. To light and festive natures the solemnity of the zealous brethren furnished copious matter of ridicule. From the Reformation to the civil war, almost every writer, gifted with a fine sense of the ludicrous, had taken some opportunity of assailing the straight haired, snuffling, whining saints, who christened their children out of the Book of Nehemiah, who groaned in spirit at the sight of Jack in the Green, and who thought it impious to taste plum porridge on Christmas day. At length a time came when the laughs began to look grave in their turn. The rigid, ungainly zealots, after having furnished much good sport during two generations, rose up in arms, conquered, ruled, and, grimly smiling, trod down under their feet the whole crowd of mockers. The wounds inflicted by gay and petulant malice were retaliated with the gloomy and implacable malice peculiar to bigots who mistake their own rancour for virtue. The theatres were closed. The players were flogged. The press was put under the guardianship of austere licensers. The Muses were banished from their own

*Jack in the Green.* Man enclosed in wicker framework who danced in the May Day sports.

favourite haunts, Cambridge and Oxford. Cowley, Crashaw, and Cleveland were ejected from their fellowships. The young candidate for academical honours was no longer required to write Ovidian epistles or Virgilian pastorals, but was strictly interrogated by a synod of lowering Supralapsarians as to the day and hour when he experienced the new birth. Such a system was of course fruitful of hypocrites. Under sober clothing and under visages composed to the expression of austerity lay hid during several years the intense desire of licence and of revenge. At length that desire was gratified. The Restoration emancipated thousands of minds from a yoke which had become insupportable. The old fight recommenced, but with an animosity altogether new. It was now not a sportive combat, but a war to the death. The Roundhead had no better quarter to expect from those whom he had persecuted than a cruel slave driver can expect from insurgent slaves still bearing the marks of his collars and his scourges.

The war between wit and Puritanism soon became a war between wit and morality. The hostility excited by a grotesque caricature of virtue did not spare virtue herself. Whatever the canting Roundhead had regarded with reverence was insulted. Whatever he had proscribed was favoured. Because he had been scrupulous about trifles, all scruples were treated with derision. Because he had covered his failings with

*Supralapsarians.* A name given to those Calvinists who believed that man's fate was determined before the creation of the world.



the mask of devotion, men were encouraged to obtrude with cynic impudence all their most scandalous vices on the public eye. Because he had punished illicit love with barbarous severity, virgin purity and conjugal fidelity were to be made a jest. To that sanctimonious jargon which was his Shibboleth, was opposed another jargon not less absurd and much more odious. As he never opened his mouth except in scriptural phrase, the new breed of wits and fine gentlemen never opened their mouths without uttering ribaldry of which a porter would now be ashamed, and without calling on their Maker to curse them, sink them, confound them, blast them, and damn them.

It is not strange, therefore, that our polite literature, when it revived with the revival of the old civil and ecclesiastical polity, should have been profoundly immoral. A few eminent men, who belonged to an earlier and better age, were exempt from the general contagion. The verse of Waller still breathed the sentiments which had animated a more chivalrous generation. Cowley, distinguished as a loyalist and as a man of letters, raised his voice courageously against the immorality which disgraced both letters and loyalty. A mightier poet, tried at once by pain, danger, poverty, obloquy and blindness, meditated, undisturbed by the obscene tumult which raged all around him, a song so sublime and so holy that it would not have misbecome the lips of those ethereal Virtues whom he saw, with that inner eye which no calamity could darken, flinging down on the jasper pavement their crowns of amaranth and gold. The

vigorous and fertile genius of Butler, if it did not altogether escape the prevailing infection, took the disease in a mild form. But these were men whose minds had been trained in a world which had passed away. They gave place in no long time to a younger generation of wits; and of that generation, from Dryden down to Dufey, the common characteristic was hardhearted, shameless, swaggering licentiousness, at once inelegant and inhuman. The influence of these writers was doubtless noxious, yet less noxious than it would have been had they been less depraved. The poison which they administered was so strong that it was, in no long time, rejected with nausea. None of them understood the dangerous art of associating images of unlawful pleasure with all that is endearing and ennobling. None of them was aware that a certain decorum is essential even to voluptuousness, that drapery may be more alluring than exposure, and that the imagination may be far more powerfully moved by delicate hints which impel it to exert itself than by gross descriptions which it takes in passively.

The spirit of Antipuritan reaction pervades almost the whole polite literature of the reign of Charles the Second. But the very quintessence of that spirit will be found in the comic drama. The playhouses, shut by the meddling fanatic in the day of his power, were again crowded. To their old attractions new and more powerful attractions had been added. Scenery, dresses, and decorations such as would now be thought mean or absurd, but such as would have

been esteemed incredibly magnificent by those who, early in the seventeenth century, sate on the filthy benches of the Hope, or under the thatched roof of the Rose, dazzled the eyes of the multitude. The fascination of sex was called in to aid the fascination of art: and the young spectator saw, with emotions unknown to the contemporaries of Shakespeare and Jonson, tender and sprightly heroines personated by lovely women. From the day on which the theatres were reopened they became seminaries of vice; and the evil propagated itself. The profligacy of the representations soon drove away sober people. The frivolous and dissolute who remained required every year stronger and stronger stimulants. Thus the artists corrupted the spectators, and the spectators the artists, till the turpitude of the drama became such as must astonish all who are not aware that extreme relaxation is the natural effect of extreme restraint, and that an age of hypocrisy is, in the regular course of things, followed by an age of impudence.

Nothing is more characteristic of the times than the care with which the poets contrived to put all their loosest verses into the mouths of women. The compositions in which the greatest licence was taken were the epilogues. They were almost always recited by favourite actresses; and nothing charmed the depraved audience so much as to hear lines grossly indecent repeated by a beautiful girl, who was supposed to have not yet lost her innocence.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Collier has censured this odious practice with his usual force and keenness.

Our theatre was indebted in that age for many plots and characters to Spain, to France, and to the old English masters: but whatever our dramatists touched they tainted. In their imitations the houses of Calderon's stately and high-spirited Castilian gentlemen became sties of vice, Shakespeare's Viola a procuress, Molière's Misanthrope a ravisher, Molière's Agnes an adulteress. Nothing could be so pure or so heroic but that it became foul and ignoble by transfusion through those foul and ignoble minds.

Such was the state of the drama; and the drama was the department of polite literature in which a poet had the best chance of obtaining a subsistence by his pen. The sale of books was so small that a man of the greatest name could expect only a pittance for the copyright of the best performance. There cannot be a stronger instance than the fate of Dryden's last production, the *Fables*. That volume was published when he was universally admitted to be the chief of living English poets. It contains about twelve thousand lines. The versification is admirable; the narratives and descriptions full of life. To this day "Palamon and Arcite," "Cymon and Iphigenia," "Theodore and Honoria," are the delight both of critics and of schoolboys. The collection includes "Alexander's Feast," the noblest ode in our language. For the copyright Dryden received two hundred and fifty pounds, less than in our days has sometimes been paid for two articles in a review.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The contract will be found in Sir Walter Scott's edition of Dryden.

Nor does the bargain seem to have been a hard one. For the book went off slowly; and the second edition was not required until the author had been ten years in his grave. By writing for the theatre it was possible to earn a much larger sum with much less trouble. Southern made seven hundred pounds by one play.<sup>1</sup> Otway was raised from beggary to temporary affluence by the success of his *Don Carlos*.<sup>2</sup> Shadwell cleared a hundred and thirty pounds by a single representation of the *Squire of Alsatia*.<sup>3</sup> The consequence was that every man who had to live by his wit wrote plays, whether he had any internal vocation to write plays or not. It was thus with Dryden. As a satirist he has rivalled Juvenal. As a didactic poet he perhaps might, with care and meditation, have rivalled Lucretius. Of lyric poets he is, if not the most sublime, the most brilliant and spirit-stirring. But nature, profuse to him of many rare gifts, had denied him the dramatic faculty. Nevertheless all the energies of his best years were wasted on dramatic composition. He had too much judgment not to be aware that in the power of exhibiting character by means of dialogue he was deficient. That deficiency he did his best to conceal, sometimes by surprising and amusing incidents, sometimes by stately declamation, sometimes by harmonious numbers, sometimes by ribaldry but too well suited to the taste of a profane and licentious

<sup>1</sup> See the *Life of Southern*, by Shiels.

<sup>2</sup> See Rochester's *Trial of the Poets*.

<sup>3</sup> *Some Account of the English Stage*.

pit. Yet he never obtained any theatrical success equal to that which rewarded the exertions of some men far inferior to him in general powers. He thought himself fortunate if he cleared a hundred guineas by a play; a scanty remuneration, yet apparently larger than he could have earned in any other way by the same quantity of labour.<sup>1</sup>

The recompense which the wits of that age could obtain from the public was so small, that they were under the necessity of eking out their incomes by levying contributions on the great. Every rich and good-natured lord was pestered by authors with a mendicancy so importunate, and a flattery so abject, as may in our time seem incredible. The patron to whom a work was inscribed was expected to reward the writer with a purse of gold. The fee paid for the dedication of a book was often much larger than the sum which any publisher would give for the copyright. Books were therefore frequently printed merely that they might be dedicated. This traffic in praise produced the effect which might have been expected. Adulation pushed to the verge, sometimes of nonsense, and sometimes of impiety, was not thought to disgrace a poet. Independence, veracity, self-respect, were things not required by the world from him. In truth, he was in morals something between a pandar and a beggar.

To the other vices which degraded the literary character was added, towards the close of the reign of Charles the Second, the most savage intemperance

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Southern*, by Shiels.



of party spirit. The wits, as a class, had been impelled by their old hatred of Puritanism to take the side of the court, and had been found useful allies. Dryden, in particular, had done good service to the Government. His *Absalom and Achitophel*, the greatest satire of modern times, had amazed the town, had made its way with unprecedented rapidity even into rural districts, and had, wherever it appeared, bitterly annoyed the Exclusionists, and raised the courage of the Tories. But we must not, in the admiration, which we naturally feel for noble diction and versification, forget the great distinctions of good and evil. The spirit by which Dryden and several of his compeers were at this time animated against the Whigs deserves to be called fiendish. The servile Judges and Sheriffs of those evil days could not shed blood so fast as the poets cried out for it. Calls for more victims, hideous jests on hanging, bitter taunts on those who, having stood by the King in the hour of danger, now advised him to deal mercifully and generously by his vanquished enemies, were publicly recited on the stage, and, that nothing might be wanting to the guilt and the shame, were recited by women, who, having long been taught to discard all modesty, were now taught to discard all compassion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> If any reader thinks my expressions too severe, I would advise him to read Dryden's Epilogue to the *Duke of Guise*, and to observe that it was spoken by a woman.

## IX. THE GROWTH OF SCIENCE

It is a remarkable fact that, while the lighter literature of England was thus becoming a nuisance and a national disgrace, the English genius was effecting in science a revolution which will, to the end of time, be reckoned among the highest achievements of the human intellect. Bacon had sown the good seed in a sluggish soil and an ungenial season. He had not expected an early crop, and in his last testament had solemnly bequeathed his fame to the next age. During a whole generation his philosophy had, amidst tumults, wars, and proscriptions, been slowly ripening in a few well-constituted minds. While factions were struggling for dominion over each other, a small body of sages had turned away with benevolent disdain from the conflict, and had devoted themselves to the nobler work of extending the dominion of man over matter. As soon as tranquility was restored, these teachers easily found attentive audience. For the discipline through which the nation had passed had brought the public mind to a temper well fitted for the reception of the Verulamian doctrine. The civil troubles had stimulated the faculties of the educated classes, and had called forth a restless activity and an insatiable curiosity, such as had not before been known among us. Yet the effect of those troubles was that schemes of political and religious reform

*Verulamian doctrine.* Teachings of Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam.

were generally regarded with suspicion and contempt. During twenty years the chief employment of busy and ingenious men had been to frame constitutions with first magistrates, without first magistrates, with hereditary senates, with senates appointed by lot, with annual senates, with perpetual senates. In these plans nothing was omitted. All the details, all the nomenclature, all the ceremonial of the imaginary government was fully set forth, Polemarchs and Phylarchs, Tribes and Galaxies, the Lord Archon and the Lord Strategus. Which ballot boxes were to be green and which red, which balls were to be of gold and which of silver, which magistrates were to wear hats and which black velvet caps with peaks, how the mace was to be carried and when the heralds were to uncover, these, and a hundred more such trifles, were gravely considered and arranged by men of no common capacity and learning.<sup>1</sup> But the time for these visions had gone by; and, if any steadfast republican still continued to amuse himself with them, fear of public derision and of a criminal information generally induced him to keep his fancies to himself. It was now unpopular and unsafe to mutter a word against the fundamental laws of the monarchy: but daring and ingenious men might indemnify themselves by treating with disdain what had lately been considered as the fundamental laws of nature. The torrent which had been dammed up in one channel rushed violently into another. The revolutionary

<sup>1</sup> See particularly Harrington's *Oceana*.

*Polemarchs, etc.* Titles borrowed from the Greeks.

spirit, ceasing to operate in politics, began to exert itself with unprecedented vigour and hardihood in every department of physics. The year 1660, the era of the restoration of the old constitution, is also the era from which dates the ascendancy of the new philosophy. In that year the Royal Society, destined to be a chief agent in a long series of glorious and salutary reforms, began to exist.<sup>1</sup> In a few months experimental science became all the mode. The transfusion of blood, the ponderation of air, the fixation of mercury, succeeded to that place in the public mind which had been lately occupied by the controversies of the Rota. Dreams of perfect forms of government made way for dreams of wings with which men were to fly from the Tower to the Abbey, and of double-keeled ships which were never to founder in the fiercest storm. All classes were hurried along by the prevailing sentiment. Cavalier and Roundhead, Churchman and Puritan were for once allied. Divines, jurists, statesmen, nobles, princes, swelled the triumph of the Baconian philosophy. Poets sang with emulous fervour the approach of the golden age. Cowley, in lines weighty with thought and resplendent with wit, urged the chosen seed to take possession of the promised land flowing with milk and honey, that land which their great deliverer and lawgiver had seen, as from the summit of Pisgah, but had not been permitted to enter.<sup>2</sup> Dryden, with more zeal than knowledge, joined his voice to the

<sup>1</sup> See Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*.

<sup>2</sup> Cowley's *Ode to the Royal Society*.

general acclamation, and foretold things which neither he nor anybody else understood. The Royal Society, he predicted, would soon lead us to the extreme verge of the globe, and there delight us with a better view of the moon.<sup>1</sup> Two able and aspiring prelates, Ward, Bishop of Salisbury, and Wilkins, Bishop of Chester, were conspicuous among the leaders of the movement. Its history was eloquently written by a younger divine, who was rising to high distinction in his profession, Thomas Sprat, afterwards Bishop of Rochester. Both Chief Justice Hale and Lord Keeper Guildford stole some hours from the business of their courts to write on hydrostatics. Indeed it was under the immediate directions of Guildford that the first barometers ever exposed to sale in London were constructed.<sup>2</sup> Chemistry divided, for a time, with wine and love, with the stage and the gaming table, with the intrigues of a courtier and the intrigues of a demagogue, the attention of the fickle Buckingham. Rupert has the credit of having invented mezzotinto; and from him is named that curious bubble of glass which has long amused children and puzzled philosophers. Charles himself had a laboratory at Whitehall, and was far more active and attentive there than at the council board. It was almost necessary to the character of a fine

<sup>1</sup> Then we upon the globe's last verge shall go,  
And view the ocean leaning on the sky;  
From thence our rolling neighbours we shall know,  
And on the lunar world securely pry.

*Annus Mirabilis, 164.*

\* North's *Life of Guildford*.

gentleman to have something to say about airpumps and telescopes; and even fine ladies, now and then, thought it becoming to affect a taste for science, went in coaches and six to visit the Gresham curiosities, and broke forth into cries of delight at finding that a magnet really attracted a needle, and that a microscope really made a fly look as large as a sparrow.<sup>1</sup>

In this, as in every great stir of the human mind, there was doubtless something which might well move a smile. It is the universal law that whatever pursuit, whatever doctrine, becomes fashionable, shall lose a portion of that dignity which it had possessed while it was confined to a small but earnest minority, and was loved for its own sake alone. It is true that the follies of some persons who, without any real aptitude for science, professed a passion for it, furnished matter of contemptuous mirth to a few malignant satirists who belonged to the preceding generation, and were not disposed to unlearn the law of their youth.<sup>2</sup> But it is not less true that the great work of interpreting nature was performed by the English of that age as it had never before been performed in any age by any nation. The spirit of Francis Bacon was abroad, a spirit admirably compounded of audacity and sobriety. There was strong persuasion that the whole world was full of

<sup>1</sup> Pepys's *Diary*, 30th May, 1667.

<sup>2</sup> Butler was, I think, the only man of real genius who, between the Restoration and the Revolution, showed a bitter enmity to the new philosophy, as it was then called. See the *Satire on the Royal Society* and the *Elephant in the Moon*.



secrets of high moment to the happiness of man, and that man had, by his Maker, been intrusted with the key which, rightly used, would give access to them. There was at the same time a conviction that in physics it was impossible to arrive at the knowledge of general laws except by the careful observation of particular facts. Deeply impressed with these great truths, the professors of the new philosophy applied themselves to their task, and, before a quarter of a century had expired, they had given ample earnest of what has since been achieved. Already a reform of agriculture had been commenced. New vegetables were cultivated. New implements of husbandry were employed. New manures were applied to the soil.<sup>1</sup> Evelyn had, under the formal sanction of the Royal Society, given instructions to his countrymen in planting. Temple, in his intervals of leisure, had tried many experiments in horticulture, and had proved that many delicate fruits, the natives of more favoured climates, might, with the help of art, be grown on English ground. Medicine, which in France was still in abject bondage, and afforded an inexhaustible subject of just ridicule to Molière, had in England become an experimental and progressive science, and every day made some new advance, in defiance of Hippocrates and Galen. The

<sup>1</sup> The eagerness with which the agriculturists of that age tried experiments and introduced improvements, is well described by Aubrey, *Natural History of Wiltshire*, 1685.

*Hippocrates.* Greek philosopher of the fifth century B.C., called "the father of medicine."

*Galen.* Celebrated writer on medicine, second century A.D.

attention of speculative men had been, for the first time, directed to the important subject of sanitary police. The great plague of 1665 induced them to consider with care the defective architecture, draining, and ventilation of the capital. The great fire of 1666 afforded an opportunity for effecting extensive improvements. The whole matter was diligently examined by the Royal Society; and to the suggestions of that body must be partly attributed the changes which, though far short of what the public welfare required, yet made a wide difference between the new and the old London, and probably put a final close to the ravages of pestilence in our country.<sup>1</sup> At the same time one of the founders of the society, Sir William Petty, created the science of political arithmetic, the humble but indispensable handmaid of political philosophy. No kingdom of nature was left unexplored. To that period belong the chemical discoveries of Boyle, and the earliest botanical researches of Sloane. It was then that Ray made a new classification of birds and fishes, and that the attention of Woodward was first drawn towards fossils and shells. One after another phantoms which had haunted the world through ages of darkness fled before the light. Astrology and alchymy became jests. Soon there was scarcely a county in which some of the Quorum did not smile contemptuously when an old woman was brought before them for riding on broomsticks or giving cattle the murrain. But it was in those noblest and most arduous depart-

<sup>1</sup> Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*.

ments of knowledge in which induction and mathematical demonstration co-operate for the discovery of truth, that the English genius won in that age the most memorable triumphs. John Wallis placed the whole system of statics on a new foundation. Edmund Halley investigated the properties of the atmosphere, the ebb and flow of the sea, the laws of magnetism, and the course of the comets; nor did he shrink from toil, peril, and exile in the cause of science. While he, on the rock of Saint Helena, mapped the constellations of the southern hemisphere, our national observatory was rising at Greenwich; and John Flamsteed, the first astronomer royal, was commencing that long series of observations which is never mentioned without respect and gratitude in any part of the globe. But the glory of these men, eminent as they were, is cast into the shade by the transcendant lustre of one immortal name. In Isaac Newton two kinds of intellectual power, which have little in common, and which are not often found together in a very high degree of vigour, but which nevertheless are equally necessary in the most sublime departments of physics, were united as they have never been united before or since. There may have been minds as happily constituted as his for the cultivation of pure mathematical science; there may have been minds as happily constituted for the cultivation of science purely experimental: but in no other mind have the demonstrative faculty and the inductive faculty co-existed in such supreme excellence and perfect

harmony. Perhaps in an age of Scotists and Thomists even his intellect might have run to waste, as many intellects ran to waste which were inferior only to his. Happily the spirit of the age on which his lot was cast, gave the right direction to his mind; and his mind reacted with tenfold force on the spirit of the age. In the year 1685 his fame, though splendid, was only dawning; but his genius was in the meridian. His great work, that work which effected a revolution in the most important provinces of natural philosophy, had been completed, but was not yet published, and was just about to be submitted to the consideration of the Royal Society.

It is not very easy to explain why the nation which was so far before its neighbours in science should in art have been far behind them all. Yet such was the fact. It is true that in architecture, an art which is half a science, an art in which none but a geometrician can excel, an art which has no standard of grace but what is directly or indirectly dependent on utility, an art of which the creations derive a part, at least, of their majesty from mere bulk, our country could boast of one truly great man, Christopher Wren; and the fire which laid London in ruins had given him an opportunity, unprecedented in modern history, of displaying his powers. The austere beauty of the Athenian portico, the gloomy sublimity of the Gothic arcade, he was, like almost all his contemporaries, incapable of

*Scotists and Thomists.* Followers of Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas, rival philosophers of the thirteenth century.

emulating, and perhaps incapable of appreciating: but no man, born on our side of the Alps, has imitated with so much success the magnificence of the palace-like churches of Italy. Even the superb Lewis has left to posterity no work which can bear a comparison with Saint Paul's. But at the close of the reign of Charles the Second there was not a single English painter or statuary whose name is now remembered. This sterility is somewhat mysterious; for painters and statuaries were by no means a despised or an ill paid class. Their social position was at least as high as at present. Their gains, when compared with the wealth of the nation and with the remuneration of other descriptions of intellectual labour, were even larger than at present. Indeed the munificent patronage which was extended to artists drew them to our shores in multitudes. Lely, who has preserved to us the rich curls, the full lips, and the languishing eyes of the frail beauties celebrated by Hamilton, was a Westphalian. He had died in 1680, having long lived splendidly, having received the honour of knighthood, and having accumulated a good estate out of the fruits of his skill. His noble collection of drawings and pictures was, after his decease, exhibited by the royal permission in the Banqueting House at Whitehall, and was sold by auction for the almost incredible sum of twenty-six thousand pounds, a sum which bore a greater proportion to the fortunes of the rich men of that day than a hundred thousand pounds would bear to the fortunes of the

*Statuary. Sculptor.*

rich men of our time.<sup>1</sup> Lely was succeeded by his countryman Godfrey Kneller, who was made first a knight and then a baronet, and who, after keeping up a sumptuous establishment, and after losing much money by unlucky speculations, was still able to bequeath a large fortune to his family. The two Vandeveldes, natives of Holland, had been tempted by English liberality to settle here, and had produced for the King and his nobles some of the finest sea pieces in the world. Another Dutchman, Simon Varelst, painted glorious sunflowers and tulips for prices such as had never before been known. Verrio, a Neapolitan, covered ceilings and staircases with Gorgons and Muses, Nymphs and Satyrs, Virtues and Vices, Gods quaffing nectar, and laurelled princes riding in triumph. The income which he derived from his performances enabled him to keep one of the most expensive tables in England. For his pieces at Windsor alone he received seven thousand pounds, a sum then sufficient to make a gentleman of moderate wishes perfectly easy for life, a sum greatly exceeding all that Dryden, during a literary life of forty years, obtained from the booksellers.<sup>2</sup> Verrio's chief assistant and successor, Lewis Laguerre, came from France. The two most celebrated sculptors of that day were also foreigners. Cibber, whose pathetic emblems of Fury and Melancholy still adorn Bedlam, was a Dane. Gibbons, to whose graceful

<sup>1</sup> Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting*; *London Gazette*, 31st May, 1683. North's *Life of Guildford*.

<sup>2</sup> The great prices paid to Varelst and Verrio are mentioned in Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting*.



fancy and delicate touch many of our palaces, colleges, and churches owe their finest decorations, was a Dutchman. Even the designs for the coins were made by French medallists. Indeed, it was not till the reign of George the Second that our country could glory in a great painter; and George the Third was on the throne before she had reason to be proud of any of her sculptors.

## X. LABOUR IN TOWN AND COUNTRY

It is time that this description of the England which Charles the Second governed should draw to a close. Yet one subject of the highest moment still remains untouched. Nothing has as yet been said of the great body of the people, of those who held the ploughs, who tended the oxen, who toiled at the looms of Norwich and squared the Portland stone for Saint Paul's. Nor can very much be said. The most numerous class is precisely the class respecting which we have the most meagre information. In those times philanthropists did not yet regard it as a sacred duty, nor had demagogues yet found it a lucrative trade, to expatiate on the distress of the labourer. History was too much occupied with courts and camps to spare a line for the hut of the peasant, or for the garret of the mechanic. The press now often sends forth in a day a greater quantity of discussion and declamation about the condition of the working man than was published during the twenty-eight years which elapsed between the Restoration

and the Revolution. But it would be a great error to infer from the increase of complaint that there has been any increase of misery.

The great criterion of the state of the common people is the amount of their wages; and, as four fifths of the common people were, in the seventeenth century, employed in agriculture, it is especially important to ascertain what were then the wages of agricultural industry. On this subject we have the means of arriving at conclusions sufficiently exact for our purpose.

Sir William Petty, whose mere assertion carries great weight, informs us that a labourer was by no means in the lowest state who received for a day's work fourpence with food, or eightpence without food. Four shillings a week therefore were, according to Petty's calculation, fair agricultural wages.<sup>1</sup>

That this calculation was not remote from the truth we have abundant proof. About the beginning of the year 1685 the Justices of Warwickshire, in the exercise of a power entrusted to them by an Act of Elizabeth, fixed, at their quarter sessions, a scale of wages for the county, and notified that every employer who gave more than the authorised sum, and every working man who received more, would be liable to punishment. The wages of the common agricultural labourer, from March to September, were fixed at the precise sum mentioned by Petty, namely four shillings a week without food. From September to March the wages were to be only three and sixpence a week.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Petty's *Political Arithmetic*.

<sup>2</sup> Stat. 5 Eliz. c. 4; *Archæologia*, vol. xi.

But in that age, as in ours, the earnings of the peasant were very different in different parts of the kingdom. The wages of Warwickshire were probably about the average, and those of the counties near the Scottish border below it: but there were more favoured districts. In the same year, 1685, a gentleman of Devonshire, named Richard Dunning, published a small tract, in which he described the condition of the poor of that county. That he understood his subject well it is impossible to doubt; for a few months later his work was reprinted, and was, by the magistrates assembled in quarter sessions at Exeter, strongly recommended to the attention of all parochial officers. According to him, the wages of the Devonshire peasant were, without food, about five shillings a week.<sup>1</sup>

Still better was the condition of the labourer in the neighbourhood of Bury St. Edmunds. The magistrates of Suffolk met there in the spring of 1682 to fix a rate of wages, and resolved that, where the labourer was not boarded, he should have five shillings a week in winter, and six in summer.<sup>2</sup>

In 1661 the justices at Chelmsford had fixed the wages of the Essex labourer, who was not boarded, at six shillings in winter and seven in summer. This seems to have been the highest remuneration given in the kingdom for agricultural labour between the Restoration and the Revolution; and it is to be

<sup>1</sup> *Plain and easy Method showing how the Office of Overseer of the Poor may be managed*, by Richard Dunning; 1st edition, 1685; 2nd edition, 1686.

<sup>2</sup> Cullum's *History of Hawsted*.

observed that, in the year in which this order was made, the necessities of life were immoderately dear. Wheat was at seventy shillings the quarter, which would even now be considered as almost a famine price.<sup>1</sup>

These facts are in perfect accordance with another fact which seems to deserve consideration. It is evident that, in a country where no man can be compelled to become a soldier, the ranks of an army cannot be filled if the government offers much less than the wages of common rustic labour. At present the pay and beer money of a private in a regiment of the line amount to seven shillings and sevenpence a week. This stipend, coupled with the hope of a pension, does not attract the English youth in sufficient numbers; and it is found necessary to supply the deficiency by enlisting largely from among the poorer population of Munster and Connaught. The pay of the private foot soldier in 1685 was only four shillings and eightpence a week; yet it is certain that the government in that year found no difficulty in obtaining many thousands of English recruits at very short notice. The pay of the private foot soldier in the army of the Commonwealth had been seven shillings a week, that is to say, as much as a corporal received under Charles the Second;<sup>2</sup> and seven shillings a week had been found sufficient to fill the ranks with men decidedly superior to the generality of the people. On the whole, therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that, in the reign of Charles

<sup>1</sup> Ruggles on the Poor.

<sup>2</sup> See, in Thurloe's *State Papers*, the memorandum of the Dutch Deputies, dated 2nd/12th August, 1653.

the Second, the ordinary wages of the peasant did not exceed four shillings a week; but that, in some parts of the kingdom, five shillings, six shillings, and, during the summer months, even seven shillings were paid. At present a district where a labouring man earns only seven shillings a week is thought to be in a state shocking to humanity. The average is very much higher; and, in prosperous counties, the weekly wages of husbandmen amount to twelve, fourteen, and even sixteen shillings.

The remuneration of workmen employed in manufactures has always been higher than that of the tillers of the soil. In the year 1680, a member of the House of Commons remarked that the high wages paid in this country made it impossible for our textures to maintain a competition with the produce of the Indian looms. An English mechanic, he said, instead of slaving like a native of Bengal for a piece of copper, exacted a shilling a day.<sup>1</sup> Other evidence is extant, which proves that a shilling a day was the pay to which the English manufacturer then thought himself entitled, but that he was often forced to work for less. The common people of that age were not in the habit of meeting for public discussion, of haranguing, or of petitioning Parliament. No newspaper pleaded their cause. It was in rude rhyme that their love and hatred, their exultation and their distress found utterance. A great part of their history is to be learned only from their ballads. One of the

<sup>1</sup> The orator was Mr. John Basset, Member for Barnstaple. See Smith's *Memoirs of Wool*, chapter lxxviii.

*Manufacturer. Operative.*

most remarkable of the popular lays chaunted about the streets of Norwich and Leeds in the time of Charles the Second may still be read on the original broadside. It is the vehement and bitter cry of labour against capital. It describes the good old times when every artisan employed in the woollen manufacture lived as well as a farmer. But those times were past. Sixpence a day was now all that could be earned by hard labour at the loom. If the poor complained that they could not live on such a pittance, they were told that they were free to take it or leave it. For so miserable a recompense were the producers of wealth compelled to toil, rising early and lying down late, while the master clothier, eating, sleeping, and idling, became rich by their exertions. A shilling a day, the poet declares, is what the weaver would have, if justice were done.<sup>1</sup> We may therefore

<sup>1</sup> This ballad is in the British Museum. The precise year is not given; but the Imprimatur of Roger Lestrangle fixes the date sufficiently for my purpose. I will quote some of the lines. The master clothier is introduced speaking as follows:

In former ages we used to give,  
So that our workfolks like farmers did live;  
But the times are changed, we will make them know.

We will make them to work hard for sixpence a day,  
Though a shilling they deserve if they had their just pay;  
If at all they murmur and say 'tis too small,  
We bid them choose whether they'll work at all.  
And thus we do gain all our wealth and estate,  
By many poor men that work early and late.  
Then hey for the clothing trade! It goes on brave;  
We scorn for to toyle and moyl, nor yet to slave.  
Our workmen do work hard, but we live at ease,  
We go when we will, and we come when we please.



conclude that, in the generation which preceded the Revolution, a workman employed in the great staple manufacture of England thought himself fairly paid if he gained six shillings a week.

It may here be noticed that the practice of setting children prematurely to work, a practice which the state, the legitimate protector of those who cannot protect themselves, has, in our time, wisely and humanely interdicted, prevailed in the seventeenth century to an extent which, when compared with the extent of the manufacturing system, seems almost incredible. At Norwich, the chief seat of the clothing trade, a little creature of six years old was thought fit for labour. Several writers of that time, and among them some who were considered as eminently benevolent, mention, with exultation, the fact that in that single city boys and girls of very tender age created wealth exceeding what was necessary for their own subsistence by twelve thousand pounds a year.<sup>1</sup> The more carefully we examine the history of the past, the more reason shall we find to dissent from those who imagine that our age has been fruitful of new social evils. The truth is that the evils are, with scarcely an exception, old. That which is new is the intelligence which discerns and the humanity which remedies them.

When we pass from the weavers of cloth to a different class of artisans, our inquiries will still lead

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlayne's *State of England*; Petty's *Political Arithmetic*, chapter viii.; Dunning's *Plain and Easy Method*; Firmin's *Proposition for the Employing of the Poor*. It ought to be observed that Firmin was an eminent philanthropist.

us to nearly the same conclusions. During several generations, the Commissioners of Greenwich Hospital have kept a register of the wages paid to different classes of workmen who have been employed in the repairs of the building. From this valuable record it appears that, in the course of a hundred and twenty years, the daily earnings of a bricklayer have risen from half a crown to four and tenpence, those of the mason from half a crown to five and threepence, those of the carpenter from half a crown to five and fivepence, and those of the plumber from three shillings to five and sixpence.

It seems clear, therefore, that the wages of labour, estimated in money, were, in 1685, not more than half of what they now are; and there were few articles important to the working man of which the price was not, in 1685, more than half of what it now is. Beer was undoubtedly much cheaper in that age than at present. Meat was also cheaper, but was still so dear that hundreds of thousands of families scarcely knew the taste of it.<sup>1</sup> In the cost of wheat there has been very little change. The average price of the quarter, during the last twelve years of Charles the Second, was fifty shillings. Bread, therefore, such as is now given to the inmates of a workhouse, was then seldom seen, even on the trencher of a yeoman or of a shopkeeper. The great majority

<sup>1</sup> King in his *Natural and Political Conclusions* roughly estimated the common people of England at 880,000 families. Of these families 440,000, according to him, ate animal food twice a week. The remaining 440,000 ate it not at all, or at most not oftener than once a week.

of the nation lived almost entirely on rye, barley, and oats.

The produce of tropical countries, the produce of the mines, the produce of machinery, was positively dearer than at present. Among the commodities for which the labourer would have had to pay higher in 1685 than his posterity pay in 1848 were sugar, salt, coals, candles, soap, shoes, stockings, and generally all articles of clothing and all articles of bedding. It may be added, that the old coats and blankets would have been, not only more costly, but less serviceable than the modern fabrics.

It must be remembered that those labourers who were able to maintain themselves and their families by means of wages were not the most necessitous members of the community. Beneath them lay a large class which could not subsist without some aid from the parish. There can hardly be a more important test of the condition of the common people than the ratio which this class bears to the whole society. At present the men, women, and children who receive relief appear from the official returns to be, in bad years, one tenth of the inhabitants of England, and, in good years, one thirteenth. Gregory King estimated them in his time at more than a fifth; and this estimate, which all our respect for his authority will scarcely prevent us from calling extravagant, was pronounced by Davenant eminently judicious.

We are not quite without the means of forming an estimate for ourselves. The poor rate was un-

doubtedly the heaviest tax borne by our ancestors in those days. It was computed, in the reign of Charles the Second, at near seven hundred thousand pounds a year, much more than the produce either of the excise or of the customs, and little less than half the entire revenue of the crown. The poor rate went on increasing rapidly, and appears to have risen in a short time to between eight and nine hundred thousand a year, that is to say, to one sixth of what it now is. The population was then less than a third of what it now is. The minimum of wages, estimated in money, was half of what it now is; and we can therefore hardly suppose that the average allowance made to a pauper can have been more than half of what it now is. It seems to follow that the proportion of the English people which received parochial relief then must have been larger than the proportion which receives relief now. It is good to speak on such questions with diffidence: but it has certainly never yet been proved that pauperism was a less heavy burden or a less serious social evil during the last quarter of the seventeenth century than it is in our own time.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fourteenth Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, Appendix B. No. 2, Appendix C. No. 1, 1848. Of the two estimates of the poor rate mentioned in the text one was formed by Arthur Moore, the other, some years later, by Richard Dunning. Moore's estimate will be found in Davenant's *Essay on Ways and Means*; Dunning's in Sir Frederic Eden's valuable work on the poor. King and Davenant estimate the paupers and beggars in 1696 at the incredible number of 1,330,000 out of a population of 5,500,000. In 1846 the number of persons who received relief appears from the official returns to have been only 1,332,089 out of a population of about

In one respect it must be admitted that the progress of civilisation has diminished the physical comforts of a portion of the poorest class. It has already been mentioned that, before the Revolution, many thousands of square miles, now enclosed and cultivated, were marsh, forest, and heath. Of this wild land much was, by law, common, and much of what was not common by law was worth so little that the proprietors suffered it to be common in fact. In such a tract, squatters and trespassers were tolerated to an extent now unknown. The peasant who dwelt there could, at little or no charge, procure occasionally some palatable addition to his hard fare, and provide himself with fuel for the winter. He kept a flock of geese on what is now an orchard rich with apple blossoms. He snared wild fowl on the fen which has long since been drained and divided into corn fields and turnip fields. He cut turf among the furze bushes on the moor which is now a meadow bright with clover and renowned for butter and cheese. The progress of agriculture and the increase of population necessarily deprived him of these privileges. But against this disadvantage a long list of advantages is to be set off. Of the blessings which civilisation and philosophy bring with them a large proportion is common to all ranks, and would,

17,000,000. It ought also to be observed that, in the official returns, a pauper is very likely to be reckoned more than once.

I would advise the reader to consult De Foe's pamphlet entitled *Giving Alms no Charity*, and the Greenwich tables which will be found in Mr. M'Culloch's *Commercial Dictionary* under the head Prices.

if withdrawn, be missed as painfully by the labourer as by the peer. The market place which the rustic can now reach with his cart in an hour was, a hundred and sixty years ago, a day's journey from him. The street which now affords to the artisan, during the whole night, a secure, a convenient, and a brilliantly lighted walk was, a hundred and sixty years ago, so dark after sunset that he would not have been able to see his hand, so ill paved that he would have run constant risk of breaking his neck, and so ill watched that he would have been in imminent danger of being knocked down and plundered of his small earnings. Every bricklayer who falls from a scaffold, every sweeper of a crossing who is run over by a carriage, may now have his wounds dressed and his limbs set with a skill such as, a hundred and sixty years ago, all the wealth of a great lord like Ormond, or of a merchant prince like Clayton, could not have purchased. Some frightful diseases have been extirpated by science; and some have been banished by police. The term of human life has been lengthened over the whole kingdom, and especially in the towns. The year 1685 was not accounted sickly; yet in the year 1685 more than one in twenty-three of the inhabitants of the capital died.<sup>1</sup> At present only one inhabitant of the capital in forty dies annually. The difference in salubrity between the London of the nineteenth century and the London of the seventeenth century is very far greater than the difference between London in an ordinary season and London in the cholera.

<sup>1</sup> The deaths were 23,222.—Petty's *Political Arithmetic*.



Still more important is the benefit which all orders of society, and especially the lower orders, have derived from the mollifying influence of civilisation on the national character. The groundwork of that character has indeed been the same through many generations, in the sense in which the groundwork of the character of an individual may be said to be the same when he is a rude and thoughtless schoolboy and when he is a refined and accomplished man. It is pleasing to reflect that the public mind of England has softened while it has ripened, and that we have, in the course of ages, become, not only a wiser, but also a kinder people. There is scarcely a page of the history or lighter literature of the seventeenth century which does not contain some proof that our ancestors were less humane than their posterity. The discipline of workshops, of schools, of private families, though not more efficient than at present, was infinitely harsher. Masters, well born and bred, were in the habit of beating their servants. Pedagogues knew no way of imparting knowledge but by beating their pupils. Husbands, of decent station, were not ashamed to beat their wives. The implacability of hostile factions was such as we can scarcely conceive. Whigs were disposed to murmur because Stafford was suffered to die without seeing his bowels burned before his face. Tories reviled and insulted Russell as his coach passed from the Tower to the scaffold in Lincoln's Inn Fields.<sup>1</sup> As little mercy was shown by the populace to sufferers of a humbler rank.

<sup>1</sup> Burnet, i. 560.

If an offender was put into the pillory, it was well if he escaped with life from the shower of brickbats and paving stones.<sup>1</sup> If he was tied to the cart's tail, the crowd pressed round him, imploring the hangman to give it the fellow well, and make him howl.<sup>2</sup> Gentlemen arranged parties of pleasure to Bridewell on court days, for the purpose of seeing the wretched women who beat hemp there whipped.<sup>3</sup> A man pressed to death for refusing to plead, a woman burned for coining, excited less sympathy than is now felt for a galled horse or an overdriven ox. Fights compared with which a boxing match is a refined and humane spectacle were among the favourite diversions of a large part of the town. Multitudes assembled to see gladiators hack each other to pieces with deadly weapons, and shouted with delight when one of the combatants lost a finger or an eye. The prisons were hells on earth, seminaries of every crime and of every disease. At the assizes the lean and yellow culprits brought with them from their cells to the dock an atmosphere of stench and pestilence which sometimes avenged them signally on bench, bar, and jury. But on all this misery society looked with profound indifference. Nowhere could be found that sensitive and restless compassion which has, in our time, extended a powerful protection to the factory child, to the Hindoo widow, to the negro slave, which pries into the stores and water-

<sup>1</sup> Muggleton's *Acts of the Witnesses of the Spirit*.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Brown describes such a scene in lines which I do not venture to quote.

<sup>3</sup> Ward's *London Spy*.

casks of every emigrant ship, which winces at every lash laid on the back of a drunken soldier, which will not suffer the thief in the hulks to be ill fed or overworked, and which has repeatedly endeavoured to save the life even of the murderer. It is true that compassion ought, like all other feelings, to be under the government of reason, and has, for want of such government, produced some ridiculous and some deplorable effects. But the more we study the annals of the past the more shall we rejoice that we live in a merciful age, in an age in which cruelty is abhorred, and in which pain, even when deserved, is inflicted reluctantly and from a sense of duty. Every class doubtless has gained largely by this great moral change: but the class which has gained most is the poorest, the most dependent, and the most defenceless.

The general effect of the evidence which has been submitted to the reader seems hardly to admit of doubt. Yet, in spite of evidence, many will still imagine to themselves the England of the Stuarts as a more pleasant country than the England in which we live. It may at first sight seem strange that society, while constantly moving forward with eager speed, should be constantly looking backward with tender regret. But these two propensities, inconsistent as they may appear, can easily be resolved into the same principle. Both spring from our impatience of the state in which we actually are. That impatience, while it stimulates us to surpass preceding generations, disposes us to overrate their

happiness. It is, in some sense, unreasonable and ungrateful in us to be constantly discontented with a condition which is constantly improving. But, in truth, there is constant improvement precisely because there is constant discontent. If we were perfectly satisfied with the present, we should cease to contrive, to labour, and to save with a view to the future. And it is natural that, being dissatisfied with the present, we should form a too favourable estimate of the past.

In truth we are under a deception similar to that which misleads the traveller in the Arabian desert. Beneath the caravan all is dry and bare: but far in advance, and far in the rear, is the semblance of refreshing waters. The pilgrims hasten forward and find nothing but sand where, an hour before, they had seen a lake. They turn their eyes and see a lake where, an hour before, they were toiling through sand. A similar illusion seems to haunt nations through every stage of the long progress from poverty and barbarism to the highest degrees of opulence and civilisation. But, if we resolutely chase the mirage backward, we shall find it recede before us into the regions of fabulous antiquity. It is now the fashion to place the golden age of England in times when noblemen were destitute of comforts the want of which would be intolerable to a modern footman, when farmers and shopkeepers breakfasted on loaves the very sight of which would raise a riot in a modern workhouse, when men died faster in the purest country air than they now die in the most pestilential

lanes of our towns, and when men died faster in the lanes of our towns than they now die on the coast of Guiana. We too shall, in our turn, be outstripped, and in our turn be envied. It may well be, in the twentieth century, that the peasant of Dorsetshire may think himself miserably paid with fifteen shillings a week; that the carpenter at Greenwich may receive ten shillings a day; that labouring men may be as little used to dine without meat as they now are to eat rye bread; that sanitary police and medical discoveries may have added several more years to the average length of human life; that numerous comforts and luxuries which are now unknown, or confined to a few, may be within the reach of every diligent and thrifty working man. And yet it may then be the mode to assert that the increase of wealth and the progress of science have benefited the few at the expense of the many, and to talk of the reign of Queen Victoria at the time when England was truly merry England, when all classes were bound together by brotherly sympathy, when the rich did not grind the faces of the poor, and when the poor did not envy the splendour of the rich.

*It may well be, etc.* In 1920 the fixed minimum wage of agricultural labourers was 42s. 6d. per week, and carpenters' wages were about 16s. per day.



## APPENDIX

NEARLY twenty years before his *History* was published, Macaulay wrote a review of a book by the poet Robert Southey, which was entitled, *Sir Thomas More ; or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society*. In this book Southey supposes that the spirit of Sir Thomas More, statesman, reformer, and author of *Utopia*, visits him and discusses the "Progress and Prospects of Society" at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Some passages from Macaulay's Essay on the book are given below because their subject-matter is closely connected with topics treated in the Third Chapter in the *History* and also because they are of particular interest to present-day readers who are also students of social affairs.

### I. THE MANUFACTURING SYSTEM

We now come to the conversations which pass between Mr. Southey and Sir Thomas More, or rather between two Southeys, equally eloquent, equally angry, equally unreasonable, and equally given to talking about what they do not understand.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps we could not select a better instance of the spirit which pervades the whole book

<sup>1</sup> A passage in which some expressions used by Mr. Southey were misrepresented, certainly without any unfair intention, has been here omitted.



than the passages in which Mr. Southey gives his opinion of the manufacturing system. There is nothing which he hates so bitterly. It is, according to him, a system more tyrannical than that of the feudal ages, a system of actual servitude, a system which destroys the bodies and degrades the minds of those who are engaged in it. He expresses a hope that the competition of other nations may drive us out of the field; that our foreign trade may decline; and that we may thus enjoy a restoration of national sanity and strength. But he seems to think that the extermination of the whole manufacturing population would be a blessing, if the evil could be removed in no other way.

Mr. Southey does not bring forward a single fact in support of these views; and, as it seems to us, there are facts which lead to a very different conclusion. In the first place, the poor-rate is very decidedly lower in the manufacturing than in the agricultural districts. If Mr. Southey will look over the Parliamentary returns on this subject, he will find that the amount of parochial relief required by the labourers in the different counties of England is almost exactly in inverse proportion to the degree in which the manufacturing system has been introduced into those counties. The returns for the years ending in March 1825, and in March 1828, are now before us. In the former year we find the poor-rate highest in Sussex, about twenty shillings to every inhabitant. Then come Buckinghamshire, Essex, Suffolk, Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Kent, and

Norfolk. In all these the rate is above fifteen shillings a head. We will not go through the whole. Even in Westmoreland and the North Riding of Yorkshire the rate is at more than eight shillings. In Cumberland and Monmouthshire, the most fortunate of all the agricultural districts, it is at six shillings.<sup>a</sup> But in the West Riding of Yorkshire it is as low as five shillings; and when we come to Lancashire, we find it at four shillings, one fifth of what it is in Sussex. The returns of the year ending in March 1828 are a little, and but a little, more unfavourable to the manufacturing districts. Lancashire, even in that season of distress, required a smaller poor-rate than any other district, and little more than one fourth of the poor-rate raised in Sussex. Cumberland alone, of the agricultural districts, was as well off as the West Riding of Yorkshire. These facts seem to indicate that the manufacturer is both in a more comfortable and in a less dependent situation than the agricultural labourer.

As to the effect of the manufacturing system on the bodily health, we must beg leave to estimate it by a standard far too low and vulgar for a mind so imaginative as that of Mr. Southey, the proportion of births and deaths. We know that, during the growth of this atrocious system, this new misery, to use the phrases of Mr. Southey, this new enormity, this birth of a portentous age, this pest which no man can approve whose heart is not seared or whose understanding has not been darkened, there has been a great diminution of mortality, and that this

diminution has been greater in the manufacturing towns than anywhere else. The mortality still is, as it always was, greater in towns than in the country. But the difference has diminished in an extraordinary degree. There is the best reason to believe that the annual mortality of Manchester, about the middle of the last century, was one in twenty-eight. It is now reckoned at one in forty-five. In Glasgow and Leeds a similar improvement has taken place. Nay, the rate of mortality in those three great capitals of the manufacturing districts is now considerably less than it was, fifty years ago, over England and Wales taken together, open country and all. We might with some plausibility maintain that the people live longer because they are better fed, better lodged, better clothed, and better attended in sickness, and that these improvements are owing to that increase of national wealth which the manufacturing system has produced.

Much more might be said on this subject. But to what end? It is not from bills of mortality and statistical tables that Mr. Southey has learned his political creed. He cannot stoop to study the history of the system which he abuses, to strike the balance between the good and evil which it has produced, to compare district with district, or generation with generation. We will give his own reason for his opinion, the only reason which he gives for it, in his own words:

We remained awhile in silence looking upon the assemblage of dwellings below. Here, and in the adjoining hamlet of Millbeck, the effects of manufactures

and of agriculture may be seen and compared. The old cottages are such as the poet and the painter equally delight in beholding. Substantially built of the native stone without mortar, dirtied with no white lime, and their long low roofs covered with slate, if they had been raised by the magic of some indigenous Amphion's music, the materials could not have adjusted themselves more beautifully in accord with the surrounding scene; and time has still further harmonized them with weather-stains, lichens, and moss, short grasses, and short fern, and stone-plants of various kinds. The ornamented chimneys, round or square, less adorned than those which, like little turrets, crest the houses of the Portuguese peasantry, and yet not less happily suited to their place; the hedge of clipt box beneath the windows, the rose-bushes beside the door, the little patch of flower-ground, with its tall holly-hocks in front; the garden beside, the bee-hives, and the orchard with its bank of daffodils and snow-drops, the earliest and the profusest in these parts, indicate in the owners some portion of ease and leisure, some regard to neatness and comfort, some sense of natural, and innocent, and healthful enjoyment. The new cottages of the manufacturers are upon the manufacturing pattern—naked, and in a row.

“How is it,” said I, “that every thing which is connected with manufactures presents such features of unqualified deformity? From the largest of Mammon's temples down to the poorest hovel in which his helotry are stalled, these edifices have all one character. Time will not mellow them; nature will neither clothe nor conceal them; and they will remain always as offensive to the eye as to the mind.”

Here is wisdom. Here are the principles on which nations are to be governed. Rose-bushes and poor-rates, rather than steam-engines and independence. Mortality and cottages with weather-stains, rather than health and long life with edifices which time

cannot mellow. We are told, that our age has invented atrocities beyond the imagination of our fathers; that society has been brought into a state, compared with which extermination would be a blessing; and all because the dwellings of cotton-spinners are naked and rectangular. Mr. Southey has found out a way, he tells us, in which the effects of manufactures and agriculture may be compared. And what is this way? To stand on a hill, to look at a cottage and a factory, and to see which is the prettier. Does Mr. Southey think that the body of the English peasantry live, or ever lived, in substantial or ornamented cottages, with box-hedges, flower-gardens, bee-hives, and orchards? If not, what is his parallel worth? We despise those mock philosophers, who think that they serve the cause of science by depreciating literature and the fine arts. But if any thing could excuse their narrowness of mind, it would be such a book as this. It is not strange that, when one enthusiast makes the picturesque the test of political good, another should feel inclined to proscribe altogether the pleasures of taste and imagination.

## II. THE OLD DAYS AND THE NEW

The signs of the times, Mr. Southey tells us, are very threatening. His fears for the country would decidedly preponderate over his hopes, but for his firm reliance on the mercy of God. Now, as we

know that God has once suffered the civilised world to be overrun by savages, and the Christian religion to be corrupted by doctrines which made it, for some ages, almost as bad as Paganism, we cannot think it inconsistent with his attributes that similar calamities should again befall mankind.

We look, however, on the state of the world, and of this kingdom in particular, with much greater satisfaction and with better hopes. Mr. Southey speaks with contempt of those who think the savage state happier than the social. On this subject, he says, Rousseau never imposed on him even in his youth. But he conceives that a community which has advanced a little way in civilisation is happier than one which has made greater progress. The Britons in the time of Cæsar were happier, he suspects, than the English of the nineteenth century. On the whole, he selects the generation which preceded the Reformation as that in which the people of this country were better off than at any time before or since.

This opinion rests on nothing, as far as we can see, except his own individual associations. He is a man of letters; and a life destitute of literary pleasures seems insipid to him. He abhors the spirit of the present generation, the severity of its studies, the boldness of its inquiries, and the disdain with which it regards some old prejudices by which his own mind is held in bondage. He dislikes an utterly unenlightened age; he dislikes an investigating and reforming age. The first twenty years of the sixteenth



century would have exactly suited him. They furnished just the quantity of intellectual excitement which he requires. The learned few read and wrote largely. A scholar was held in high estimation. But the rabble did not presume to think; and even the most inquiring and independent of the educated classes paid more reverence to authority, and less to reason, than is usual in our time. This is a state of things in which Mr. Southey would have found himself quite comfortable; and, accordingly, he pronounces it the happiest state of things ever known in the world.

The savages were wretched, says Mr. Southey; but the people in the time of Sir Thomas More were happier than either they or we. Now we think it quite certain that we have the advantage over the contemporaries of Sir Thomas More, in every point in which they had any advantage over savages.

Mr. Southey does not even pretend to maintain that the people in the sixteenth century were better lodged or clothed than at present. He seems to admit that in these respects there has been some little improvement. It is indeed a matter about which scarcely any doubt can exist in the most perverse mind that the improvements of machinery have lowered the price of manufactured articles, and have brought within the reach of the poorest some conveniences which Sir Thomas More or his master could not have obtained at any price.

The labouring classes, however, were, according to Mr. Southey, better fed three hundred years ago than

at present. We believe that he is completely in error on this point. The condition of servants in noble and wealthy families, and of scholars at the Universities, must surely have been better in those times than that of day-labourers; and we are sure that it was not better than that of our workhouse paupers. From the household book of the Northumberland family, we find that in one of the greatest establishments of the kingdom the servants lived very much as common sailors live now. In the reign of Edward the Sixth the state of the students at Cambridge is described to us, on the very best authority, as most wretched. Many of them dined on pottage made of a farthing's worth of beef with a little salt and oatmeal, and literally nothing else. This account we have from a contemporary master of St. John's. Our parish poor now eat wheaten bread. In the sixteenth century the labourer was glad to eat barley, and was often forced to content himself with poorer fare. In Harrison's introduction to Holinshed we have an account of the state of our working population in the "golden days," as Mr. Southey calls them, "of good Queen Bess." "The gentilitie," says he, "commonly provide themselves sufficiently of wheat for their own tables, whylest their household and poore neighbours in some shires are inforced to content themselves with rye or barleie; yea, and in time of dearth, many with bread made eyther of beanes, peason, or otes, or of altogether, and some acornes among. I will not say that this extremity is oft so well to be seen in time of plentie as of dearth; but if I should I could easily

bring my trial: for albeit there be much more grounde eared nowe almost in everye place then hathe beene of late yeares, yet such a price of corne continueth in eache towne and markete, without any just cause, that the artificer and poore labouring man is not able to reach unto it, but is driven to content himself with horse-corne." We should like to see what the effect would be of putting any parish in England now on allowance of "horse-corne." The helotry of Mammon are not, in our day, so easily enforced to content themselves as the peasantry of that happy period, as Mr. Southey considers it, which elapsed between the fall of the feudal and the rise of the commercial tyranny.

"The people," says Mr. Southey, "are worse fed than when they were fishers." And yet in another place he complains that they will not eat fish. "They have contracted," says he, "I know not how, some obstinate prejudice against a kind of food at once wholesome and delicate, and every where to be obtained cheaply and in abundance, were the demand for it as general as it ought to be." It is true that the lower orders have an obstinate prejudice against fish. But hunger has no such obstinate prejudices. If what was formerly a common diet is now eaten only in times of severe pressure, the inference is plain. The people must be fed with what they at least think better food than that of their ancestors.

The advice and medicine which the poorest labourer can now obtain, in disease or after an accident, is far superior to what Henry the Eighth

could have commanded. Scarcely any part of the country is out of the reach of practitioners who are probably not so far inferior to Sir Henry Hallford as they are superior to Dr. Butts. That there has been a great improvement in this respect, Mr. Southey allows. Indeed he could not well have denied it. "But," says he, "the evils for which these sciences are the palliative, have increased since the time of the Druids, in a proportion that heavily overweighs the benefit of improved therapeutics." We know nothing either of the diseases or the remedies of the Druids. But we are quite sure that the improvement of medicine has far more than kept pace with the increase of disease during the last three centuries. This is proved by the best possible evidence. The term of human life is decidedly longer in England than in any former age, respecting which we possess any information on which we can rely. All the rants in the world about picturesque cottages and temples of Mammon will not shake this argument. No test of the physical well-being of society can be named so decisive as that which is furnished by bills of mortality. That the lives of the people of this country have been gradually lengthening during the course of several generations is as certain as any fact in statistics; and that the lives of men should become longer and longer, while their bodily condition during life is becoming worse and worse, is utterly incredible.

Let our readers think over these circumstances. Let them take into the account the sweating sickness,

and the plague. Let them take into the account that fearful disease which first made its appearance in the generation to which Mr. Southey assigns the palm of felicity, and raged through Europe with a fury at which the physician stood aghast, and before which the people were swept away by myriads. Let them consider the state of the northern counties, constantly the scene of robberies, rapes, massacres, and conflagrations. Let them add to all this the fact that seventy-two thousand persons suffered death by the hands of the executioner during the reign of Henry the Eighth, and judge between the nineteenth and the sixteenth century.

We do not say that the lower orders in England do not suffer severe hardships. But, in spite of Mr. Southey's assertions, and in spite of the assertions of a class of politicians, who, differing from Mr. Southey in every other point, agree with him in this, we are inclined to doubt whether the labouring classes here really suffer greater physical distress than the labouring classes of the most flourishing countries of the Continent.

It will scarcely be maintained that the *lazzaroni* who sleep under the porticoes of Naples, or the beggars who besiege the convents of Spain, are in a happier situation than the English commonalty. The distress which has lately been experienced in the northern part of Germany, one of the best governed and most prosperous regions of Europe, surpasses, if we have been correctly informed, any thing which has of late years been known among

us. In Norway and Sweden the peasantry are constantly compelled to mix bark with their bread; and even this expedient has not always preserved whole families and neighbourhoods from perishing together of famine. An experiment has lately been tried in the kingdom of the Netherlands, which has been cited to prove the possibility of establishing agricultural colonies on the waste lands of England, but which proves to our minds nothing so clearly as this, that the rate of subsistence to which the labouring classes are reduced in the Netherlands is miserably low, and very far inferior to that of the English paupers. No distress which the people here have endured for centuries approaches to that which has been felt by the French in our own time. The beginning of the year 1817 was a time of great distress in this island. But the state of the lowest classes here was luxury compared with that of the people of France. We find in Magendie's *Journal de Physiologie Expérimentale* a paper on a point of physiology connected with the distress of that season. It appears that the inhabitants of six departments, Aix, Jura, Doubs, Haute Saône, Vosges, and Saône-et-Loire, were reduced first to oatmeal and potatoes, and at last to nettles, bean-stalks, and other kinds of herbage fit only for cattle; that when the next harvest enabled them to eat barley-bread, many of them died from intemperate indulgence in what they thought an exquisite repast; and that a dropsy of a peculiar description was produced by the hard fare of the year. Dead bodies were found on the roads and in



the fields. A single surgeon dissected six of these, and found the stomach shrunk, and filled with the unwholesome aliments which hunger had driven men to share with beasts. Such extremity of distress as this is never heard of in England, or even in Ireland.

### III. THE POWERS OF THE STATE

[The following two passages are specially interesting as they give us Macaulay's opinions on the extension of the power of the State, the question which, under the title of Nationalisation, is now occupying so much attention.]

"A liberal expenditure in national works," says Mr. Southey, "is one of the surest means for promoting national prosperity." What does he mean by national prosperity? Does he mean the wealth of the state? If so, his reasoning runs thus: The more wealth a state has the better; for the more wealth a state has the more wealth it will have. This is surely something like that fallacy, which is ungallantly termed a lady's reason. If by national prosperity he means the wealth of the people, of how gross a contradiction is Mr. Southey guilty. A people, he tells us, may be too rich: a government cannot: for a government can employ its riches in making the people richer. The wealth of the people is to be taken from them, because they have too much, and laid out in works, which will yield them more.

We are really at a loss to determine whether Mr.

Southey's reason for recommending large taxation is that it will make the people rich, or that it will make them poor. But we are sure that, if his object is to make them rich, he takes the wrong course. There are two or three principles respecting public works, which, as an experience of vast extent proves, may be trusted in almost every case.

It scarcely ever happens that any private man or body of men will invest property in a canal, a tunnel, or a bridge, but from an expectation that the outlay will be profitable to them. No work of this sort can be profitable to private speculators, unless the public be willing to pay for the use of it. The public will not pay of their own accord for what yields no profit or convenience to them. There is thus a direct and obvious connection between the motive which induces individuals to undertake such a work, and the utility of the work.

Can we find any such connection in the case of a public work executed by a government? If it is useful, are the individuals who rule the country richer? If it is useless, are they poorer? A public man may be solicitous for his credit. But is not he likely to gain more credit by an useless display of ostentatious architecture in a great town than by the best road or the best canal in some remote province? The fame of public works is a much less certain test of their utility than the amount of toll collected at them. In a corrupt age, there will be direct embezzlement. In the purest age, there will be abundance of jobbing. Never were the statesmen

of any country more sensitive to public opinion, and more spotless in pecuniary transactions, than those who have of late governed England. Yet we have only to look at the buildings recently erected in London for a proof of our rule. In a bad age, the fate of the public is to be robbed outright. In a good age, it is merely to have the dearest and the worst of every thing.

Buildings for state purposes the state must erect. And here we think that, in general, the state ought to stop. We firmly believe that five hundred thousand pounds subscribed by individuals for rail-roads or canals would produce more advantage to the public than five millions voted by Parliament for the same purpose. There are certain old saws about the master's eye and about every body's business, in which we place very great faith.

There is, we have said, no consistency in Mr. Southey's political system. But if there be in his political system any leading principle, any one error which diverges more widely and variously than any other, it is that of which his theory about national works is a ramification. He conceives that the business of the magistrate is, not merely to see that the persons and property of the people are secure from attack, but that he ought to be a jack-of-all-trades, architect, engineer, schoolmaster, merchant, theologian, a Lady Bountiful in every parish, a Paul Pry in every house, spying, eaves-dropping, relieving, admonishing, spending our money for us, and choosing our opinions for us. His principle is, if we under-

stand it rightly, that no man can do any thing so well for himself as his rulers, be they who they may, can do it for him, and that a government approaches nearer and nearer to perfection, in proportion as it interferes more and more with the habits and notions of individuals.

He seems to be fully convinced that it is in the power of government to relieve all the distresses under which the lower orders labour. Nay, he considers doubt on this subject as impious. We cannot refrain from quoting his argument on this subject. It is a perfect jewel of logic.

"Many thousands in your metropolis," says Sir Thomas More, "rise every morning without knowing how they are to subsist during the day; as many of them, where they are to lay their heads at night. All men, even the vicious themselves, know that wickedness leads to misery: but many, even among the good and the wise, have yet to learn that misery is almost as often the cause of wickedness."

"There are many," says Montesinos, "who know this, but believe that it is not in the power of human institutions to prevent this misery. They see the effect, but regard the causes as inseparable from the condition of human nature."

"As surely as God is good," replies Sir Thomas, "so surely there is no such thing as necessary evil. For, by the religious mind, sickness, and pain, and death, are not to be accounted evils."

Now if sickness, pain, and death are not evils, we cannot understand why it should be an evil that thousands should rise without knowing how they are to subsist. The only evil of hunger is that it produces first pain, then sickness, and finally death.

If it did not produce these, it would be no calamity. If these are not evils, it is no calamity. We will propose a very plain dilemma: either physical pain is an evil, or it is not an evil. If it is an evil, then there is necessary evil in the universe: if it is not, why should the poor be delivered from it?

It is not by the intermeddling of Mr. Southey's idol, the omniscient and omnipotent State, but by the prudence and energy of the people, that England has hitherto been carried forward in civilisation; and it is to the same prudence and the same energy that we now look with comfort and good hope. Our rulers will best promote the improvement of the nation by strictly confining themselves to their own legitimate duties, by leaving capital to find its most lucrative course, commodities their fair price, industry and intelligence their natural reward, idleness and folly their natural punishment, by maintaining peace, by defending property, by diminishing the price of law, and by observing strict economy in every department of the state. Let the Government do this: the People will assuredly do the rest.



# COMMENTARY

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

MACAULAY'S survey of England in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries makes a striking and attractive picture. At first view it seems complete and adequate, for the main aspects of life are all included, the wealth of the nation, the population, the forces of the crown, the grades of society, country, town, and city, industry and the occupations of the people all find their place. Yet in some respects the description is superficial, and seems rather the work of a brilliant foreigner than that of a native of the land. In a sense this is true, for the England of Macaulay's day has been described as a country of two nations. In *Sybil*, by Benjamin Disraeli, we find this passage:

“ ‘ Our Queen reigns over the greatest nation that ever existed.’

“ ‘ Which nation? for she reigns over two.’ ‘ Yes, two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws: the Rich and the Poor.’ ”



This picture, while certainly exaggerated, no doubt contains an element of truth, for one of the characteristic features of the changes which were caused by the Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions was the increased differentiation between the classes. At no time in our history was the gulf so wide between the extreme sections of the people. The actual differences in the standards of life between classes were more marked in the nineteenth than in the seventeenth century. Vivid pictures of this are given by Disraeli in his novel, *Sybil*, while Mr. H. G. Wells, in his *Time Machine*, shows what may be the final condition of a land where unrelieved toil is the lot of one section of the people, and luxury and enjoyment the share of the other.

Macaulay was a member of the fortunate class, to whom the improvements caused by the two Revolutions were almost entirely an advantage, and it was natural that he should regard the nineteenth as greatly superior to the seventeenth century. The working classes were in reality foreigners to him.

There is another reason why Macaulay praised the nineteenth at the expense of the seventeenth century; in politics he belonged to the Whig party, during whose rule England had changed from an agricultural to an industrial nation. As an ardent Whig he could see no evil in his party and believed their rule had been an unmixed benefit to the nation. The more barbarous and uncivilised were the people in 1685, the greater would be the contrast with the nineteenth and the greater the credit to the Whigs.

By remembering Macaulay's political views and his ignorance of industrial life we are able to form a correct estimate of his work. As a picture representing one point of view the "State of England in 1685" is of great value to us and, allowing for his prejudices, it is substantially correct. Macaulay's pictures were true but they were not all the truth. As a Member of Parliament and a Minister of the Crown he was able to write with authority on subjects which came within the function of the Government, the increase in material wealth, the growth of population, the taxation and the condition of the Army and Navy; as a man of letters he was qualified to write of the state of literature, art, and the drama.

Macaulay's extensive reading and his travels over England enabled him to write with knowledge of the changes in the scenery, the growth of meadow and corn land, the rise of industrial towns and the development of watering-places and health resorts.

His own journeyings made him appreciate the improvements in the means of communication.

Macaulay's powers and sympathies are seen at their best in his description of London. As the home of his childhood and his residence in manhood, he had a great affection for the capital, while his intimate knowledge of the history and literature of London enabled him to revive in imagination the scenes of former days. To one who possessed the historical sense so fully London could not fail to appeal. It is the one community in England whose long-

continued importance places it among the great historic cities of Europe. The hill on which St. Paul's stands held a settlement of the ancient Britons. Londinium was the Roman capital of Southern Britain, and after the departure of the legions the city blocked the road of the Thames to the Saxon invaders. This was not the last time that our future history was shaped by London. During the Norman Conquest the campaign after Hastings was based on the importance of London. The power of the City was also illustrated when the Mayor took his place with the Peers of the Realm at the signing of Magna Carta. London, too, has played a decisive part in the military history of the nation; on its attitude depended success in the wars of Stephen and Matilda, of Simon de Montfort, and in the struggles between York and Lancaster. In the great civil war between Charles and the Parliament the support of London decided the war in favour of the people.

During all this time London towered above all other towns in importance, and through the last two centuries the growth of the capital city has been so rapid that, extraordinary as has been the rise of new industrial towns, London still retains a pre-eminence in size and importance. At the present time the metropolis ranks as the first city of the world. The London of former days is now included in the City, small in extent but the centre of the business world and the nucleus of the metropolis; Westminster, to the west, contains the Court of the Sovereign, the seat of legislature and administration

and the residences of those whose interests attach them to these centres. Between Westminster and the City lie the Law Courts surrounded with all accompaniments of the legal machine. Eastward from the City to the sea stretch the miles of docks and wharves which make the Port of London the foremost in the world; to north-east and south lie vast areas occupied in industrial pursuits, while a broad ring of suburbs serve as dormitories for the workers.

Apart from the broad statement that Macaulay was not acquainted with the actual condition of the working classes, the most serious criticism of *Chapter III.* is that concerning the state of the clergy and gentry in the seventeenth century. We cannot here examine the evidence which makes it probable that his picture of these classes was unjust, but certain broad considerations may lead us to agree with the statement that he was too fond of accepting as evidence whatever he found in the pamphlets of the day, and of constructing pictures from brief hints, too audacious in outrunning tangible evidence and too fond of the picturesque to lower his colours to reality.

It was the custom of parents of the middle classes in Stuart days to send the clever son of the family to school and college to prepare himself for his future career as parson or teacher. These sons of yeomen farmers and tradesmen usually went to the Universities and would certainly share in the revival of learning which marked the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries. The status of the village parson would naturally tend to be higher than that of the peasants, and on the whole it is generally held that his position was relatively higher than it had been in days before the Reformation.

Perhaps the best answer to Macaulay's description of the country gentry lies in the fact that these men and their fathers had risked their lives for an idea. The bucolic and illiterate squire no doubt existed, but side by side with him could be found the high-souled and well-educated gentleman of the type of John Hampden and Colonel Hutchinson, the chivalrous Sir Edmund Verney who loved the Bible and Parliament well but who loved honour more. "I have eaten the King's bread," he said, "and served him near thirty years and will not do so base a thing as to forsake him, and choose rather to lose my life to preserve and defend those things which are against my conscience."

Throughout the Stuart epoch the country gentry fulfilled an important part in the administration of the country. In each district certain of the local gentry were chosen by the Crown to act as unpaid Justices of the Peace. In particular were their services valuable in the administration of the Poor Law. Their efforts made a memory and a nursery rhyme of the days when the barking of the dogs announcing that "the beggars were coming to town" had terrified hamlet and lonely farm.

There were no doubt many grades of gentry extending from those who met the companions of the

King as equals to those whose main occupation in life was the daily hunt followed by the nightly carousal at the village alehouse.

In an eloquent passage Macaulay compares the brutality of the seventeenth century with the humanity of the nineteenth. In a measure his comparison is just, but it must not be forgotten that no accusation is more common between rival races and rival generations than that of cruelty and intolerance. Each age considers itself humane because its anger is easily roused against the cruelty of other times. On the whole, throughout his history the Englishman—except when under the influence of panic, which is the parent of cruelty—has not been of a cruel nature. The law which sentenced the sturdy beggar to be flogged at the whipping post of every town on the road till he returned to his native parish was the direct outcome of the terror caused by the bands of vagrants of two generations earlier. In an age when a small proportion only of criminals were arrested it seemed fair to the wisdom of our ancestors that the majority of them should be found guilty, and as the prison was not a place of punishment for criminals, but a place of detention for debtors, flogging or the gallows was the lot of the condemned. Under a defective police system our forefathers could hardly afford to be tolerant, and while we may condemn them for flocking to see the thief faint in the pillory under a shower of filthy missiles, or women suffer torture under the lash, we must remember that we do not know what proportion of the people went



to these sights. Events of recent years have clearly shown what cruel deeds can be done under the influence of fear, while the clamour for the revival of flogging for criminals shows that under similar conditions the old brutality might easily revive. It is probable that the people of the nineteenth century were more humane than their ancestors of two centuries earlier rather because they could afford to be than because they were better people.

Macaulay's picture is a faithful representation of one aspect of ancient days, but without consideration of other factors it is misleading.

It is, however, mainly with regard to the deeper side of life that Macaulay's work is most inadequate. He was himself a successful man and judged all things by standards of success and failure, and success was to him largely a matter of comfort and material good. It has been well said that "No historian of the first rank is so blind to the invisible world of thought and emotion or has made less effort to fathom the depths on which the pageantry of events floats like shining foam." He continually dwells with complacency on the seventeenth century as a time of general neglect, discomfort, brutality, and injustice, and points with unction to the improvements of his own days. Before we fully accept his pictures it will be wise to consider how far the progress has contributed to the general advantage of the people. To do this it is necessary to examine the conditions under which our ancestors lived.

In Mediæval England the great mass of the popula-

tion lived in villages on the product of the land around them. This land lay open, unenclosed and undivided, and cultivated by the common labour of the whole village. During the Tudor period many of these open fields were enclosed with hedges and converted into arable and pasture lands ; but the process went on but slowly, and it is probable that in the first half of the seventeenth century more than half of the corn land was still open land cultivated by the villagers after the methods of their forefathers in the days of Wat Tyler. As enclosures increased two figures came to the front, the tenant farmer who rented his land and the yeoman who owned his farm ; until the middle of the eighteenth century the general condition of England was based on a very large number of small farms and small estates with a high proportion of landowners to the total population, but with the largest section of the community represented by the agricultural labourer for hire. The labourer, however, although he possessed no land, had yet certain rights which are unknown to his modern successor. Common land for pasturage of cows, pigs, and poultry, and common rights of collecting fuel and of fowling on moor and waste were an important part of the cottager's living. In harvest time, too, his wages were increased by the wages of his wife and children, and generally spinning or weaving occupied the spare time of the housewife.

The seventeenth-century peasant thus enjoyed a certain measure of economic independence.

The second half of the eighteenth century saw an enormous increase in the rate of enclosure till within less than one hundred years the process was practically complete. Hundreds of enclosure acts were hurriedly passed by parliaments which contained no representatives of those who suffered from the process. The material advantages of this great change are well described by Macaulay; there is, however, another side to the picture. The small yeoman farmers, "the bold peasantry, their country's pride," as Goldsmith calls them, became either operatives in the new industrial towns or labourers working for hire on the land they had once owned. The cottager whose commons were lost to him sank to the position of a day labourer without any share in the land he tilled or any hope of rising to economic independence. In all the history of England few classes have ever been more utterly without enjoyment or prospects than the modern farm labourer.

At the same time that these changes were taking place in agriculture momentous alterations were being made in methods of manufacture.

Up to this time industry had been generally carried on under the domestic system. According to this method spinning and weaving were carried on in their own houses by small masters with a journeyman or assistant and an apprentice or two. Much of it was done in villages or in the suburbs of towns and it was generally connected with a certain amount of cultivation of the soil. A small master weaver or nail manufacturer, soap boiler or potter,

would also have a little farm and would divide his time between the two occupations. Much of the wool which formed the main part of England's manufactures was bought by merchants who gave it out to carders, combers, spinners, weavers, fullers, or other craftsmen.

During the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, and well into the eighteenth centuries woollen goods were still carded, spun and woven in the scattered cottages of domestic weavers and weaver-farmers in the rural districts by the hand-cards, the spinning-wheel and the old-fashioned loom.

The widespread demand for English textile goods in the eighteenth century led to the invention of mechanical appliances to increase the rate of production. The appearance of machinery on a large scale had momentous and widespread results; the new machines were too expensive for the cottager to buy, they were too large for use in a dwelling house, and they required artificial power. For these reasons goods came to be made in large factories and thus the great factory towns of England grew up. This change from the domestic to the factory system of manufacture is known as the Industrial Revolution. The immediate result was an enormous increase in the total wealth of the country, and for more than a century Britain held without dispute the first place throughout the world in industry and commerce; yet a closer examination into her internal condition shows much that was unsatisfactory.

In the first place the period of transition from the

domestic to the factory system of industry and from old to new methods of farming was one of almost unrelieved misery to great masses of those who were wedded to the old ways, who had neither the capital, the enterprise, nor the ability to attach themselves to the new conditions. For a time the hand loom weavers kept up a hopeless struggle in the garrets and cellars of factory towns while their wages sank lower and lower till finally the whole generation died out. Many of the rural population flocked into the mills, which as a rule were small, damp and unhealthy. In these early factories women and children were employed on a large scale; the hours were more regular, continuous and prolonged than under the domestic system, and the hands, in particular the women and children, worked more intensively and more persistently than under the earlier forms of industry. Moreover the rapid growth of factory towns caused a general breakdown in the old methods of providing water, drainage, and fresh air; crowded and insanitary dwellings were the result, and as a rule factory towns were filthy and demoralising.

It may be correctly asserted that as the Agrarian Revolution increased the amount of the nation's food, but depressed the condition of the agricultural classes, so the Industrial Revolution increased enormously the economic power and resources of the country but depressed the condition of the industrial worker.

To a certain extent the hardships were the inevitable results of the changes in system, but in a

larger measure they were due to the fallacy of regarding the workman solely as an economic unit and ignoring all other aspects of his life. Many people pointed out to the workers that the hardships were only temporary and that increased production would result in increased benefits to all, but the workmen answered that a man's life is but temporary and that future benefits could not compensate for present misery.

The history of England during the nineteenth century was largely concerned with the conditions which were introduced by the Industrial Revolution. The workers and their friends struggled to improve their position in the political, industrial and social world, but in 1848, when Macaulay was writing, hardly the first point had been gained. The artisans unsuccessfully claimed a share in the franchise, the restriction of factory hours was confined to textile workers and practically no attempt was made to bring education or recreation within the reach of the manual worker.

One of the most striking features of this period was the intensification of the distinction between employers and employed. This is shown in the rapid growth of Trades Unions on the one hand and of Employers' Federations and Associations on the other, while the relations between the two bodies have been described as a state of trench warfare; in 1848 the workers' trench was shallow and held only with great difficulty. At the present time the strength of the combatants is approximately equal, but more



hope-lies in the growing tendency of both sides to leave their trenches and discuss in common their differences.

Our sketch would not be complete without a survey of conditions in the twentieth century. A present-day Macaulay could look with equal complacency on the improvements of recent years. Sail has almost disappeared from the sea, while the invention of the turbine, hardly less remarkable than that of the screw propeller, has greatly improved means of communication. Steam as a motive power has been supplemented by petrol and electricity, while oil as fuel is contending for pride of place with coal; wireless telegraphy has almost annihilated distance, and "flight"—the dream of the ages—is now a commercial fact.

Our historian would, however, find a more legitimate source of congratulation in the general improvement in the condition of the people. The supply of water, light, and means of communication have been brought within the control of the people themselves through their local councils; dwelling houses, schools and hospitals are erected, while free libraries, baths, museums and recreation grounds and parks are established in most towns for the benefit of the community. Large masses of the people are now in a position to devote some time to enjoyment and recreation, while practically the whole of the adult population now possesses the vote and is able to exert some influence upon local and national affairs.

It is undisputed that on the whole the position of the artisan and skilled workman has improved during

the past half century. It must, however, be admitted that progress has been partial, and that in particular improvement in social and material conditions has passed by the lowest section of the population. The historian who considers the conditions in factory and workshop realises that of recent years industrial processes have been speeded up, the demands on the nervous energy of the workers have been increased and a greater amount of responsibility is now required, so that while the use of machinery has been increased and hours of work diminished, these have brought but little respite to the workers.

The great defect in the present system lies in the fact that about half the working people in England and Wales are untouched by industrial regulations. These include the majority of domestic employees, juvenile workers, agricultural labourers and casual and unskilled workmen.

In every large city there exists a class known as the "submerged tenth" which is insufficiently provided with the necessities of physical life, while above them is a section which lives only at the cost of a constant struggle and which too often welters, limp and stagnant, in a sordid environment.

The physical effects of the uncontrolled industrialism of the nineteenth century were clearly shown by the poor condition of many candidates for the Army during the war (and by the formation of a Bantam Division for which the usual physical regulations were relaxed), while Mr. C. E. B. Russell, a writer well acquainted with life in industrial towns,

has painted in *Social Problems of the North*, a terrible picture of the underworld of industry. He says:

During the railway strike of 1911 there arose from the depths of Liverpool a people so savage and degenerate as to horrify witnesses of the riots which took place, compelling many, even of the most thoughtless, to reflect on what must be the future of a nation which could allow such a state of affairs, and what were the causes which led to its existence.

The foregoing pages show that the nineteenth century was a time of transition and growth, a time when the problems of the new age were set but not solved. The task of solution is for the years to come, and the most hopeful sign of the future lies in the fact that the social conscience of the nation is rapidly growing more acute and sensitive, and that the people realise the incompleteness of material advance unless it is accompanied by increased happiness.

## THE WRITER OF THE HISTORY

THE value of a book is increased if we know something about the writer, what manner of man he was, how far his life had equipped him for his task and what other men think of his work.

Thomas Babington Macaulay was born in 1800. He belonged to what is generally called the upper middle class, and his early life followed the usual course of young men in that rank of society.

As a child and a schoolboy he was remarkable for his delight in books, and from his earliest years he

showed a strong inclination towards writing and gave proofs of a determined bent towards literature. From the age of three he read incessantly and talked in "printed words"; at eight years old he wrote a treatise to convert the natives of Malabar to Christianity, and even composed a Universal History from the time of the Creation to 1800. As a lad he learnt by heart Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Marmion* and then took to composing poems himself. Throughout his life Macaulay was a voracious reader; he read with remarkable speed and forgot nothing of what he read. His stupendous memory was the most obvious of his intellectual powers; he learnt *Paradise Lost* by heart and once declared that any fool could repeat backwards the list of the Archbishops of Canterbury. In 1818 young Macaulay went to Cambridge. Here his interest in history was shown by his gaining a College prize for an essay on the character of William III.—his favourite hero in English history. He was intended for the career of a lawyer and in 1826 was called to the Bar. His tastes, however, lay towards literature and politics, and he spent more time in writing and in listening to debates in the House of Commons than in studying law.

In 1825 Macaulay began writing for the *Edinburgh Review*, one of the most important journals of that time, and his Essay on Milton lifted him at a stroke into the first rank of English writers.

The rest of his life was practically one long triumph, socially, politically, and as a writer. He was a welcome guest in all circles. At different times he was

Member of Parliament for Calne, a small pocket borough, for Leeds, a rising manufacturing town, and for Edinburgh, the "Athens of the North."

As Secretary of State for War and Paymaster of the Forces Macaulay gained experience of administration and government which were of great value to him in his historical work. His service in India as Member of the Council, where to a certain extent he felt himself in exile, while it extended his knowledge of imperial problems also made him turn his attention more definitely to European history and literature.

The last fifteen years of his life were almost entirely given to writing. In 1857 he was created Baron Macaulay. He did not long enjoy the honour for he died in 1859. He was buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

Few men have enjoyed lives of such unvarying success, and it is due to this fact that Macaulay's writings breathe an air of optimism which does not always seem consistent with actual conditions.

## THE WRITINGS OF MACAULAY

ALTHOUGH his fame rests mainly on his *History*, yet the Essays and Ballads of Macaulay are sufficient to give him an important place among English men of letters.

Most of the Essays originally appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* as reviews or criticisms of newly published books. They cover a wide range of subjects, and as Macaulay was not content with discussing the

book he was reviewing, but dealt exhaustively with the topic from his own resources, the Essays are a store-house of information in history and literature.

In the realm of history the Essays give us a survey of important periods from the reign of Queen Elizabeth to the rise of the British Empire in India.

In literature we get acute and vivid descriptions of the lives and times of famous authors, among others, Milton, Addison, Johnson and Byron.

Macaulay is best known as a poet from *The Lays of Ancient Rome*, which describe life in the "good old days" of ancient Rome:

Then none was for a party;  
Then all were for the state;  
Then the great man helped the poor,  
And the poor man loved the great.  
Then lands were fairly portioned;  
Then spoils were fairly sold:  
The Romans were like brothers  
In the brave days of old.

A favourite, too, is *Ivry, A Song of the Huguenots*, with its long, sweeping, musical lines,

And thou, Rochelle, our own Rochelle, proud city of the  
waters,

Again let rapture light the eyes of all thy mourning daughters;

or

Now by the lips of those ye love, fair gentlemen of France,  
Charge for the golden lilies,—upon them with the lance.

While the *Armada*, with its glowing pride in England, strikes a responsive note in all hearts as it tells

... Of the thrice famous deeds she wrought in ancient days,  
When that great fleet invincible against her bore in vain  
The richest spoils of Mexico, the stoutest hearts of Spain.



Macaulay's popularity as a writer depends as much upon his style of writing as upon his knowledge of his subject. He was well equipped for his work, for he possessed a good foundation of classical learning with a wide knowledge of English and foreign literature. From the classics he gained his balanced sentences and mastery of antithesis, while the English language, particularly the Bible, gave him dignity and purity of style and a sense of form and rhythm. He had drunk deeply of the spirit of the ancient masters; he had studied their manner of narration and wished to reproduce their picturesqueness, their keenness of feeling, their pride in partisanship, and their glory in patriotism. Steeped as he was in the periods he was describing, the harmony between the writer and his task makes his *History* one of the literary masterpieces of his age.

The secret of his extraordinary popularity, however, lies in his perfect clearness; one may read a sentence twice to gain its full force, never to comprehend his meaning. This clearness was the result of great industry and care on Macaulay's part. He first matured his facts and got the details clearly in his mind, he then wrote and re-wrote till his sentences ran smoothly and distinctly. He could not rest till every sentence flowed like running water and every paragraph ended with a telling sentence. In his case hard writing made easy reading, for he worked hard to save his readers the trouble he took himself. Macaulay stands unrivalled as a story-teller, and his *History* contains many examples which his short,

telling sentences, his vivid touches and illustrations, and his command of detail bring straight home to the reader the picture he intends to describe.

For the average reader the *History* has one great advantage; it is easy to follow and understand; indeed, it has been said that Macaulay adopted the style of a public speaker who was addressing an unintelligent audience incapable of sustained attention.

This may be a true criticism, but in spite of all, the fascination for the *History* has lasted over half a century and will continue to exist as long as well expressed ideas and vivid descriptive writing are appreciated.

## MACAULAY AS AN HISTORIAN

MACAULAY'S name as an historian is a household word wherever the English language is spoken, and while in the preceding pages we have shown on what qualities his fame as a writer rests, there is one great feature of his work worthy of special attention which will always place him in a high position among historians.

Previous to his day it had been the custom of writers on historical subjects to confine themselves to a few well-established topics, the struggles for supremacy of rival dynasties or parties, great political events, wars and rumours of wars, with a few

personal anecdotes of the sovereigns and their chief servants, while important events in the social and political progress of the nation were entirely overlooked. Macaulay believed with Thackeray that history should be familiar rather than heroic, and he used his great descriptive powers to bring to his readers an impression of the manners and customs of bygone days and of those social changes which have greatly affected the lives of the people.

Macaulay had many of the essential qualifications of an historian. He lived in his historical studies, and his whole heart and interest were given to the men and times of which he wrote. His industry in collecting the material for his writings was unrivalled, and his conviction that historical writing is a great art whose purpose is to promote virtue and truth led him to devote as much time to the collection of information as to the treatment. He said that twenty years of study went to compose twenty years of history. He pursued his researches into the byways as well as the highways of literature so that his pictures of English life were full of colour and variety. He was fortunate in writing about a time when observation of character was carried to a high pitch and gave him abundance of material for his work.

Industry and ability in collecting information do not complete the equipment of the historian; they are but servants to the skilled workman. Macaulay was not lacking in the higher qualifications; he had the habit of thinking vividly and sympathetically about the past, which became to him a romance. By

this great historical virtue of conceiving past ages as a living reality, of seeing Whitehall or the City with the eyes of Pepys, he is able to bring before our view not only the great figures but the very surroundings and atmosphere of their times.

His equipment was completed by his genius for marshalling facts often remote and obscure and presenting the whole array with magnificent effect.

High as Macaulay's reputation justly stands, his *History* does not lack severe critics, who say that he was prejudiced and bigoted in his views, that he showed a want of moderation in the praise of his friends and the blame of his enemies, that he was intolerant towards all opinions which were contrary to those of his party, and, in short, that he lacked the judicial bent of mind which is essential to the historian. They compare him to the prosecuting advocate in contrast with the even-handed judge, and quote with triumph the saying of Lord Melbourne: "I wish I were as cocksure of any one thing as Macaulay is of everything." These criticisms cannot be dismissed as idle sayings, but on the contrary are valuable in enabling us to obtain a true perspective of the *History*. In the first place we must take into full account Macaulay's point of view. He was a Whig of the Whigs who believed that the principles of his party held the last word in political wisdom. The whole circumstances of his life led him to regard material prosperity as the touchstone of greatness, and while he was on the side of justice and mercy he had not the temperament of the

reformer which would lead him to attack deep-lying abuses.

He was no utopian or day-dreamer, but a practical man who rarely looked below the surface of events.

Macaulay's attitude is well shown in the following extract from his Essay on Southey's *Colloquies on Society*:

Our rulers will best promote the improvement of the nation by strictly confining themselves to their own legitimate duties, by leaving capital to find its most lucrative course, commodities their fair price, industry and intelligence their natural reward, idleness and folly their natural punishment, by maintaining peace, by defending property, by diminishing the price of law, and by observing strict economy in every department of the state.

This was the accepted view of the nineteenth century and may well be contrasted with the picture of the ideal state as pictured by Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia*, written three hundred years earlier, where it is the function of the state to secure the welfare, social, industrial, intellectual and religious, of the community and in particular of the labour-class as the true basis of a well-ordered commonwealth.

Macaulay was the product of his age; More is an example how the human spirit may leap forward out of the trammels of its time.

When all these criticisms are accepted the fact remains that Macaulay gives us unrivalled pictures of certain aspects of the life of bygone days and may be entitled to Lord Acton's verdict that he was the greatest historian that the world has ever known.

## THE SOURCES OF THE HISTORY

As we have seen, Macaulay searched in the highways and byways of literature for his material. In addition to the usual sources of the historian, formal histories, statutes of the realm, records of Parliament and of government departments, lighter material was not neglected, memoirs, diaries, poems and plays, broadsheets and even the records of back-stair reports and street rumours were all in turn utilised. Macaulay alludes to the burrowing he had to do and in reference to Ward's *London Spy*, one of his sources, says: "I am almost ashamed to quote such nauseous balderdash, but I have been forced to descend even lower, if possible, in search of materials."

His readiness to accept as evidence what he found in this gutter-press no doubt adds to the variety and colour of his descriptions, but on the other hand it is likely to detract from their trustworthiness.

The great number of authorities which Macaulay quotes, his frequent omission to give exact references, and the difficulty of gaining access to many of the books make it almost impossible for his statements to be checked in detail. This does not of necessity make them less reliable, for his stupendous memory enabled Macaulay to give with substantial accuracy many literary references for which he did not quote chapter and verse.

In the "State of England" alone he refers to nearly two hundred sources. The one most frequently



quoted is Chamberlayne's *State of England*, 1684, a publication which was originally produced in 1669, was revised many times and lasted till 1755. This was a popular and reliable work. His statistics are mainly taken from Gregory King, *Natural and Political Observations*, 1696, and Petty's *Political Arithmetic*.

Several allusions are made to the famous diaries of Evelyn and Pepys, while references to Clarendon, the famous historian, on the one hand, and to Tom Brown's *Comical View of London and Westminster* on the other, show the range of knowledge of the historian.

Many of Macaulay's authorities are not within the reach of the general reader, but the following may be found in the school or public library:

Evelyn's *Diary*.

The Works of Dryden.

White, *History of Selborne*.

*Life of Sir Walter Scott*.

Pepys' *Diary*.

The Works of Swift.

Fuller's *Worthies*.

Burnet, *History of his Own Times*.

Some of the histories of counties and towns to which Macaulay refers may be found in local libraries. It would be interesting to study them to get fuller pictures of the districts in which one is interested.

It is interesting also to compare the descriptions of England which Macaulay gives in *Chapter III*, with those of other writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* contains many passages which give us a vivid picture of conditions of life in the seventeenth century, for many of the obstacles and difficulties which Christian encoun-

tered in his journey were frequently met with by the travellers of those days.

Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* gives us a striking description of the depopulation of the countryside by the enclosures of the eighteenth century, while his *Vicar of Wakefield* may well be read in connection with Macaulay's account of the clergy.

The eighteenth century saw the rise of the novel, and from the great works of Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, we are able to supplement and enlarge the knowledge which we gain from the pages of Macaulay.

In addition to these contemporary writings there are a number of modern novels which deal with the period and which should not be neglected. One of the best known of these is Thackeray's *Esmond*, which is a very successful attempt to depict the period in the spirit of the age. *Lorna Doone*, by R. D. Blackmore, too, gives a good picture of the rural life of our ancestors; and the savage deeds of the outlaws in Bagworthy Forest bring to mind Macaulay's story of the robber bands of the Border country.

It is useful also to compare Macaulay's opinion of the nineteenth century, when the Industrial Revolution was fairly established, with that of some of his contemporaries as expressed in fiction. Some of the best known are *John Halifax*, by Mrs. Craik; *Sybil*, by Disraeli; *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, by Mrs. Gaskell.

Coming to our own day we find books of fact and fiction dealing with all aspects of our social life, and all useful in increasing our knowledge of modern

conditions, and in bringing us into closer sympathy with the lives of those who lie outside our own horizon. The slum life of modern London is given in *No. 5, John Street* by Richard Whiteing. Under the guise of reporting on the customs and manners of England for the loyal dwellers in a coral island in the Pacific he makes his temporary abode in a slum which although but a mile from his customary haunts is in reality as remote from them as Africa.

The same writer in *The Yellow Van* and Galsworthy in *The Freeland*s show the darker side of modern rural life; the survival of feudalism with its resultant spirit of distrust and dependence, the drain on the land when owner, farmer and labourer have each to gain a living from it, the lack of healthy cottages and the exodus from the villages and indeed all the tyranny of the countryside.

Two historical works which should be consulted and compared with *Chapter III.* are Trevelyan, *England under the Stuarts*, and Traill, *Social England*, volume iv. The former gives an account of the state of England 1603-40. On the whole it is much more attractive than Macaulay's picture, and as it describes England less than a century before Macaulay's period it is interesting and useful to compare the two accounts.

These are but brief indications of the material which lies ready to our hands in a search for light on the problems of our age, yet they may serve to point the way to the fuller knowledge which is necessary for the improvement of the world.

## EXERCISES

1. What do you consider are the main causes of the popularity of the *History*?

2. Macaulay believed that a book which claims to be "interesting" should enchain attention when it is read aloud.

Does *Chapter III.* pass this test?

3. Is it true to say that Macaulay was a foreigner to one of the nations of England?

4. Compare Macaulay's history of England in the seventeenth century with any other description of the period which you know.

5. Is it true to say that Macaulay could see no evil effects of the Whig rule in England?

6. What evidence can you give that Macaulay's belief in the progress of the nineteenth century was not entirely justified?

7. What examples does *Chapter III.* contain of Macaulay's "cocksureness"?

8. Can you choose any passages from *Chapter III.* which show that Macaulay was a fascinating story-teller?

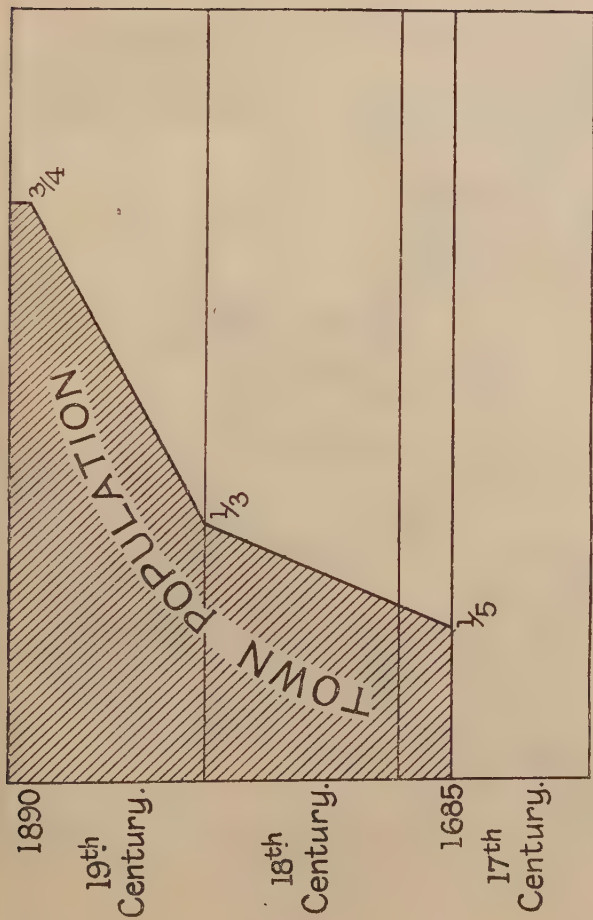
9. What instances can you give of Macaulay's habit of romantic "castle-building"?

10. Can you show from *Chapter III.* that all aspects of Macaulay's life were useful to him in writing his *History*?

11. Taking *Chapter III.* as a guide, write an account of the state of England at the present time.

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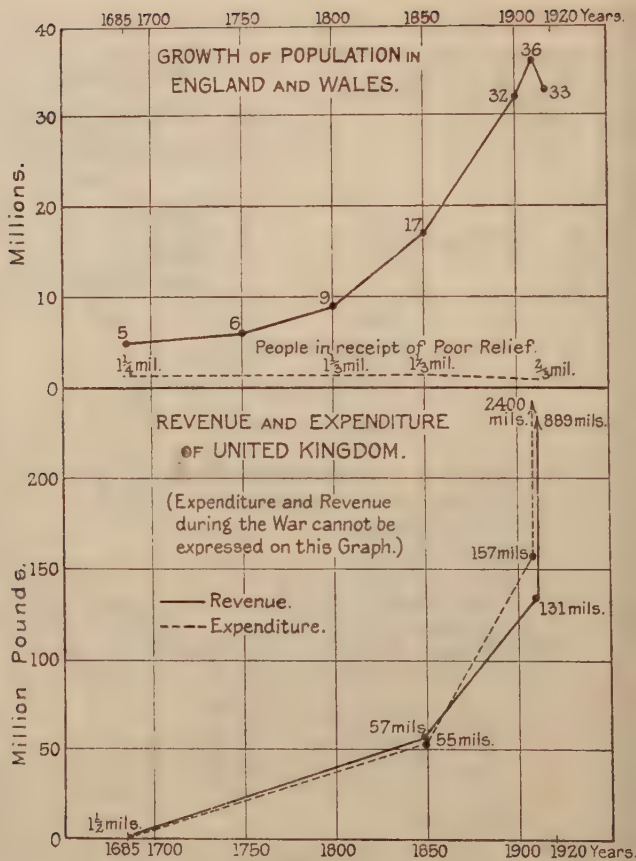


GROWTH OF TOWN POPULATION SINCE 1685

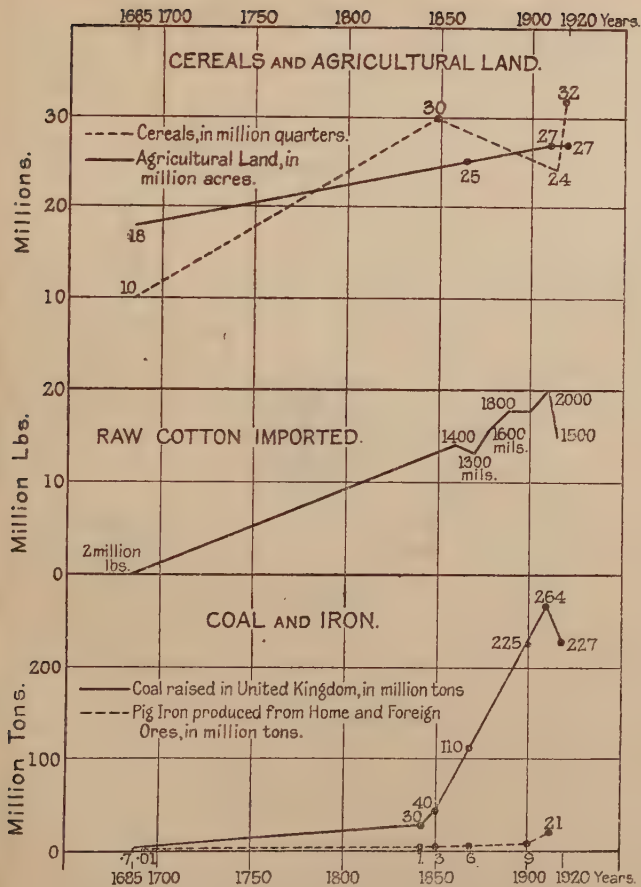








POPULATION AND REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE CHARTS FROM 1685 TO THE PRESENT TIME



RURAL AND INDUSTRIAL CHARTS FROM 1685 TO THE PRESENT TIME

MADE AT THE  
TEMPLE PRESS  
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